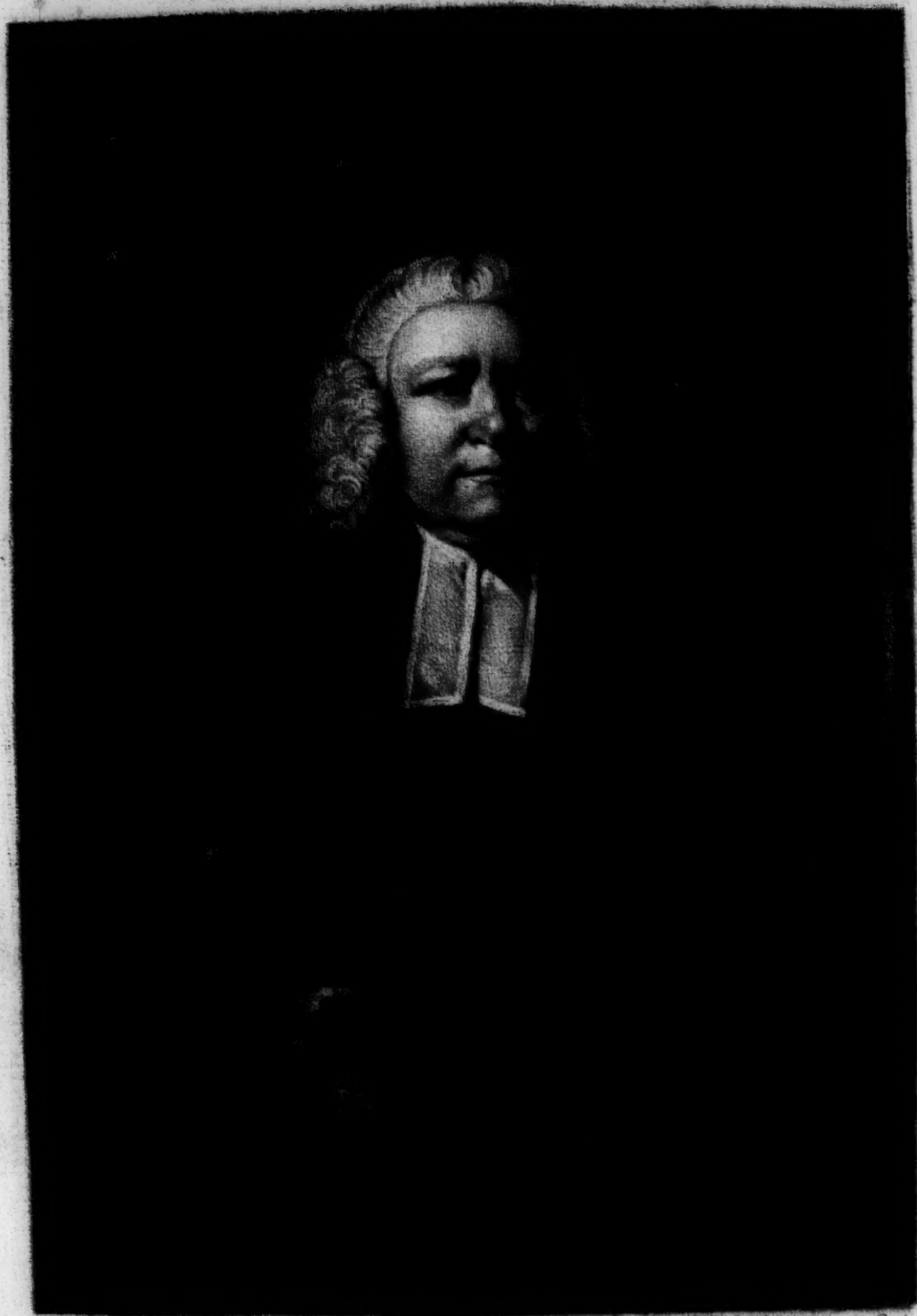




*Sir Joshua Reynolds pinxit*

*J. Spilbury fecit*

*In sto praepositis, oblitus praeteritorum.*

*Dr Ashton*



226 e 23

# S E R M O N S

ON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

BY

THOMAS ASHTON, D. D.

RECTOR OF ST. BOTOLPH BISHOPSGATE,

FELLOW OF ETON COLLEGE,

AND LATE PREACHER TO THE

HONOURABLE SOCIETY OF LINCOLN'S INN.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED BY W. BOWYER AND J. NICHOLS,  
FOR J. WHISTON, AT BOYLE'S HEAD,  
IN FLEET STREET.

MDCCLXX.



TO THE  
RIGHT HONOURABLE  
C H A R L E S  
Lord CAMDEN,

Baron CAMDEN of CAMDEN-PLACE.

My LORD,

A late unwelcome event to the publick has afforded me an opportunity of paying this small tribute to your Character, without suspicion of being influenced by your Station. The reverence we had long conceived for the first is now heightened into veneration by the sacrifice you have made of the latter.

A 2

Indeed



Indeed disinterestedness in our age and nation is so singular a phænomenon, that it is no wonder if so eminent an instance of it attract, not our admiration only, but our affection. The

“ — bonus atque fidus

“ Judex honestum prætulit utili, et

“ Rejecit alto dona nocentium

“ Vultu — ”

is an honour that is properly and almost peculiarly your own. No man can take it from you. It will accompany you in your retreat, and gild the evening of your life. Nay, it will go further, and throw a glory round you, when the sordid views of avarice shall moulder into dust, and the empty visions of vanity vanish into air.

May you, my Lord, enjoy that serenity and happy equality of mind,  
which



which is the result and present reward of conscious integrity; and may God, in mercy to this infatuated country, dispose the hearts of the governing and governed to a timely union in their seemingly opposite, but indeed inseparable interests, that our children may, as our fathers did, reap the fair fruits of honest Liberty, under the just restraints of gentle Sovereignty. I am, my Lord,

Your Lordship's

Most obliged,

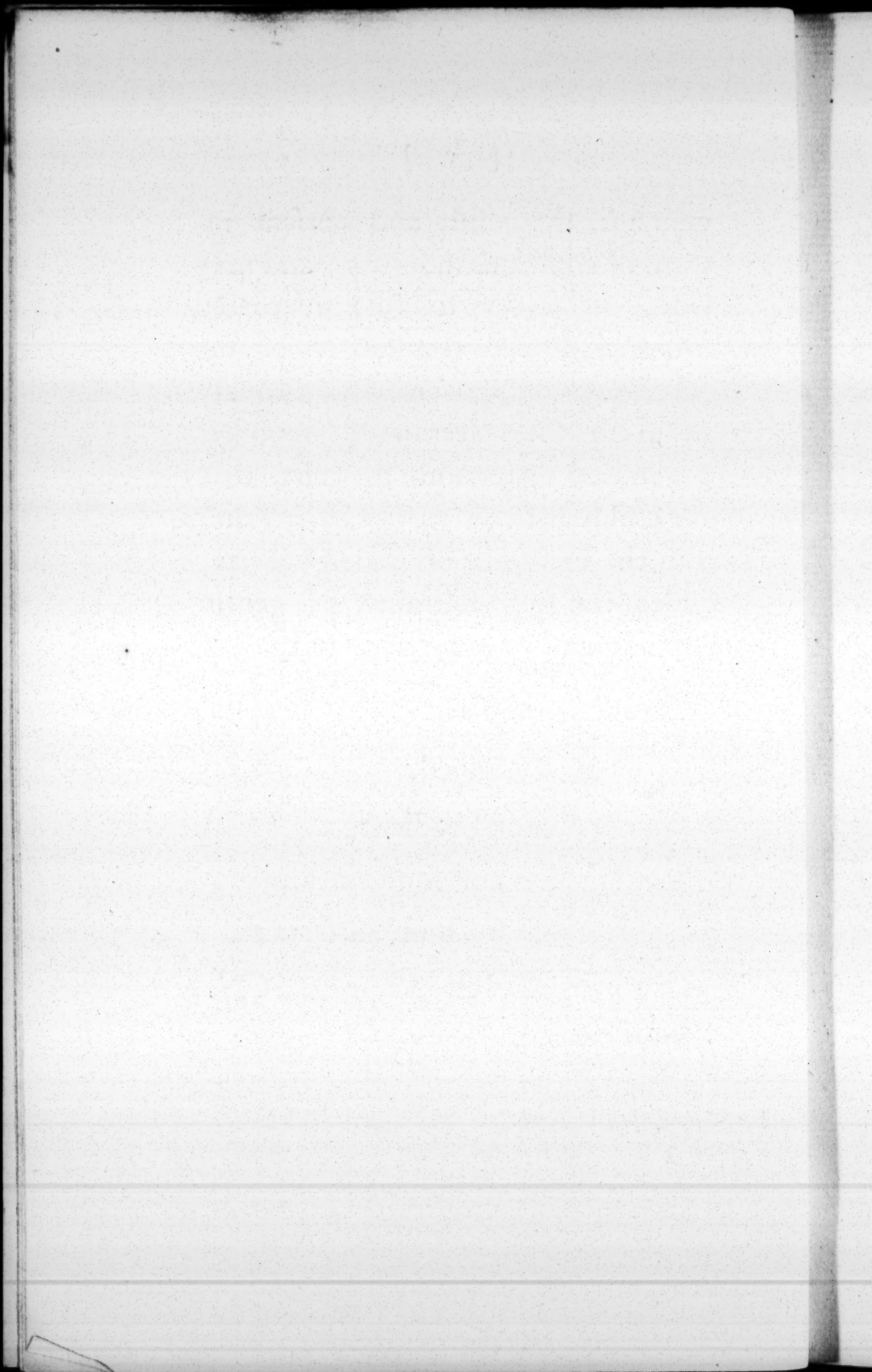
most obedient,

and most faithful

humble servant,

THOMAS ASHTON,

Bishopsgate, January  
23, 1770.



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## S E R M O N I.

God's Providence displayed in the suppression of popular tumult.

P S A L M lxxv. 7.

*Who stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.*

O R,

*Who stilleth the raging of the sea, the noise of its waves, and the madness of the people.*

Preached at Eton, October 9th, 1746.  
on the day of Thanksgiving for the suppression of the Rebellion. p. 1

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Distressed families of Gospel-ministers earnestly recommended.

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Preached at St. Paul's, before the Sons of the clergy, May 10th, 1753. p. 27



## S E R M O N III.

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Preached at the Parish church of St. Anne,  
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the Governors of the Middlesex hospital.

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early after God :*

35. *And they remembered that God was  
their Rock, and that the High God was  
their Redeemer ;*

2

36. *Never-*



## C O N T E N T S.

36. *Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues;*

37. *For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.*

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Preached at St. Margaret's church, West-  
minster, Friday, January 30th, 1761,  
the day appointed to be observed as the  
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come before him with burnt-offerings, with  
calves of a year old?*

*Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of  
rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil?  
shall I give my first-born for my transgres-  
sion, the fruit of my body for the sin of my  
soul?*

*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good;  
and what doth the Lord require of thee,  
but—to do justly, and to love mercy, and to  
walk humbly with thy God?*

Preached at Lincoln's-Inn, 1763. p. 233

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Chubb's case of Abraham examined and  
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Preached at Lincoln's-Inn, 1763. p. 252

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S E R M O N XII.

Religion the great security against the delusions of sin.

H E B. iii. 12, 13.

*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*

Preached in the Collegiate chapel at Eton,

1744.

P. 274

S E R M O N XIII.

Sudden prosperity fatal to religion.

D E U T. vi. 10, 11, 12.

*When the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, and vineyards and olive-trees, which*



*which thou plantedst not, when thou shalt  
have eaten and be full;*

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Preached at the Chapel royal, Somerset-  
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Preached at the Parish church of St. Bo-  
tolph, Bishopsgate, in the time of Lent.  
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Preached at St. Mary's, Cambridge, at the Commencement, 1759. P. 348

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*Behold! a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us.*

Preached on Christmas-day, at Lincoln's-Inn, 1761. P. 365

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Preached in the Collegiate chapel at Eton,  
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*Lead us not into temptation.*

Preached in the Collegiate chapel at Eton,  
in Lent. p. 410

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LUKE xvi. 25.

*Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in  
thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and  
likewise Lazarus evil things. But now  
he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

Intended to have been preached at the Pa-  
rish church of St. James, Westmin-  
ster, before the Governors of the Asy-  
lum; but prevented by illness. p. 439

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Habita Cantabrigiæ, in templo Beatæ Mariæ,  
1759, pro gradu Doctoratûs in Sacrà The-  
ologiâ. p. 464

## S E R M O N



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S E R M O N I.

*God's Providence displayed in the  
Suppression of Popular Tumults.*

---

P S A L M lxxv. 7.

*Who stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of  
their waves, and the tumult of the people.*

O R,

*Who stilleth the raging of the sea, the noise of  
its waves, and the madness of the people.*

**I**T is part of a description of God's amazing power, which displays itself as conspicuously in the preservation of his creatures, as it did in the first production of them.

What is most particularly observable in it is, that popular tumult, or the madness, as it is called, of the people, is compared to the roaring and rage of the sea; and the suppression of the one is placed amongst the

B

great



2      *GOD'S Providence displayed in*

great efforts and evidences of the Divine power, as well as the regulation of the other.

This manner of comparing the tumultuous rising of the people to the noise and violence of the sea, is a favourite allusion of the Psalmist, which has also struck the imagination of other prophets; and has not passed unobserved by some of the most eminent among the heathen poets.

The Psalmist scarce ever mentions the factions and rebellions, with which the Jewish government was frequently disturbed, without considering them in this light.

“ Save me, O God,” says he, “ for the  
“ waters are come in unto my soul: I am  
“ come into deep waters, where the floods  
“ overflow me:” which he explains himself, by saying, that “ they who hate him  
“ are more than the hairs of his head; they  
“ who would destroy him wrongfully, being his enemies, were mighty.”

In another place, he “ thanks God for  
“ having drawn him out of many waters;”  
in having “ delivered him from his strong  
“ enemy,” and “ from them who hated  
“ him, who,” he confesses, “ were too strong  
“ for him.”

There

*the Suppression of Popular Tumults.* 3

There seems to me to be so striking a resemblance between these two great objects, even from their first imperceptible motions, to the more visible and terrible efforts of their last workings, that I shall pursue the similitude, the propriety of which will open itself, gradually, in these particular circumstances.

The instability of the people, or its disposition to be easily put in motion: the violence and rapidity of its progress when it is once moved: and the indiscriminate ruin in which it involves every thing that opposes it.

In the prosecution of which parallel we may be able to discover, as in a rude draught, the original and progress of our late commotions: for the happy conclusion of which I shall afterwards direct your thoughts, as indeed the occasion and the subject will naturally lead them, “to him who stilleth the  
“raging of the sea, the noise of its waves,  
“and the madness of the people.”

I. The body of the people, like the body of waters, is never absolutely at rest; and when it is most so, it is always disposed to become otherwise. The description given by the prophet of one man's irresolution is equally applicable to mankind in general,



4      *G O D's Providence displayed in*

that they are “unstable as water:” that they are (as the idea is carried on by the apostle) “like a wave of the sea, driven by “the wind, and tossed.” Every breath, every whisper, moves them.

The principal winds, by which these waters are moved, are dissatisfactions with public measures: distress, or affluence, in private fortunes; assisted by a blind religious zeal in some, actuated by views of envy and ambition in others.

1. Dissatisfaction with measures of government are most easily conceived; and, when they begin to operate, are extremely productive of those murmurs and rumours amongst the people, which are the forerunners of troubles, and sure signs of approaching tempests in the state.

There is no form of government so excellent in its constitution, but that some exception may lie against it; nor was there ever any administration of government so just and prudent, as to be liable to no objection. The designs and actions of men are naturally and essentially imperfect; the rules and measures of the best-instituted and best-administered government in the world must be directed by the prospect of general good, and can never reach the partial exigencies



*the Suppression of Popular Tumults.* 5

of every individual. In the national and momentuous concern of peace and war (whatever be the real interest of a country), the particular interests of multitudes must lean different ways; and therefore, let the determination be to which side it will (and to one it must always be), it can never give an equal satisfaction to all.

It is the case in God's own government of the earth. The rains, which are the desire of the husbandman, are disagreeable to the traveller; the same season blasts the hope of the higher lands, which makes the vallies stand so thick with corn that they laugh and sing; and perhaps that wind may keep my vessel in the port, which is carrying yours to the haven where it would be.

Hence have always arisen, and do still rise, daily repinings and complaints against the government of God himself. Do we wonder, then, that they are not less frequent in the kingdoms of men!

There is a constant mutability in men (and some have not scrupled to fix the charge particularly on our own nation), a tendency to try any state but that they are in; to prefer any condition to the present. We

6      *GOD's Providence displayed in*

are apt to draw an invidious comparison between the present and past times; to multiply the difficulties of one, and to magnify the felicity of the other. Every present inconvenience is augmented upon our sensation, every past one diminished in the recollection.

When we turn our thoughts to the present time, we are like persons making a long journey through a rich and fruitful country, where the beauty of the prospect is abated by the tediousness of the way; when we turn our eye back to past days, we are like persons taking a distant view of some rich vale through which they have gone, where the beauty of the country takes such entire possession of the mind, that we forget the difficulty of the road and the fatigue of the journey.

We do not, in general, distinguish justly, between those defects which flow from want of honesty or ability in governors, and those which result immediately from the essence of government; and every dissatisfaction, of what nature soever, how unjustly soever conceived, has an equal tendency to unsettle the minds of the people, and to excite commotions in the state.

2. But



2. But besides this disposition to motion in the people, they are further subject to be moved either by affluent, or by desperate, circumstances in their private fortunes. It should seem strange that two so directly opposite causes should concur in producing the same bad effect: but so it does happen, that the very prosperity of those who mistake the use of it, instead of begetting in their minds that content and thankfulness which one should expect as its most natural consequence, is apt to excite in them those turbulent and unruly passions, from whence, experience confirms the declaration of an apostle that "wars and "fightings amongst us are sure to come."

And perhaps there are few temptations stronger than that which arises from the hope of recovering an overthrown estate. This flattering expectation has drawn men, of otherwise not remarkably evil principles, into desperate attempts, both against private families, and public communities. It is but too natural, and too common, for persons whose fortunes have been shipwrecked, even by their own indolence and folly, to engage themselves in any designs, how wicked soever, to retrieve them. When they

8      *G O D's Providence displayed in*

are reduced to want, they curse God and the King; Religion, as well as Loyalty, is become an empty word with them.

Much more likely is it where the estates of families have been forfeited to the society, for practices against the state. In this there is a sort of conceived right of inheritance, and an insatiable thirst of revenge against those states, by which the persons have been in reality hurt, in imagination injured, in their honours and fortunes.

Nothing therefore can more easily put the people in motion than such a hope.

3. It must be confessed with regret, since it cannot be denied with truth, that the sacred name of Religion, which one might have hoped would have contributed to allay these troubles, has but too frequently conspired to foment them.

I know nothing that has, nothing that ought to have, a greater influence upon truly rational minds, than a regard to true religion: and nothing, in general, has a greater influence upon weak minds, than false pretences to it. When men once begin to fancy God himself to be become an accessory and a party to their proceedings (though  
they



they be such as are unworthy of the nature and inconsistent with the declarations of God), there is nothing they will stick at to advance their pretensions.

This has often been the case, and I fear will always be so, with respect to most persuasions of religion, but particularly to that one, the head of which “is exalted above every thing that is called God:” who does not only call down fire from heaven upon the head of every one who dissents from him here; but, with an impious arrogance, assumes the peculiar prerogative of the Deity, and distributes his vengeance through the other world.

4. The discontents which arise from these different causes are excellent instruments in the hands of factious and ambitious men, who, under the profession of seeking public interest, are better able to promote, while they conceal, their own.

There is one fatal defect in all governments; “that every man cannot possibly be at the head of any.” This, as it is the real motive to faction, so the unavoidable inconveniences, and doubtful questions, in-

cident

cident to government, throw a better colour on it.

The body of mankind are not yet so thoroughly corrupted, as to run wilfully into measures destructive of the state, if they could discern the consequences of them through the beginnings. It is the pretended love of their country that must delude men into those steps which tend to its destruction. This pretence is of double service, to screen the seditious, and to confound the honest. It is with a people as with a private person; an apparent concern for their welfare is one of the surest methods to give them a mortal wound.

What pity is it that, when the very appearance of public virtue is so engaging, there should be so little of the reality! What a laudable jealousy has been excited in a people against partialities to a foreign nation! what a generous indignation against all who durst allow themselves to accept of any advantages in the service of their country! Where are they now? surely, not entirely lost. No, they still breathe in the memorable orations of those whose stubborn virtue



tue held out while the cause of it subsisted, and was only to be overcome by the irresistible force of that power and place which they had the disinterestedness to abhor, till they had the opportunity to acquire.

In the mean time the people were moved by these specious pretences of grievance; the poisonous discontent had operated too far to be suppressed, and the multitude were prepared for confusion, while their leaders sat at ease under the shadow of that government which it had been the unwearied business of their lives to distress.

By every one of these means taken singly, you see, the people may most easily be put into motion; but when they all conspire together, as in our late troubles they seem to have done, how violently, how precipitately, must they be moved!

When to the constant mutability of our nature, perhaps of our climate, is added the restlessness that arises from plenty and satiety, as well as from poverty and want; when religion incites men to such measures as should only be expected from the want of it; when even the honest and well-meaning are  
involved

involved in the pretended zeal of the factious and ambitious: it is easy to conceive what commotions these circumstances may raise in a people, and to what height those commotions may rise.

A very superficial view of human nature may serve to convince us, that any one passion adds wings to a man in the progress he makes towards accomplishing his end. It is natural therefore to suppose, that when all these different and even contradictory impulses to action, like so many boisterous and contrary winds, have raised the ferment in a people, it must be “like the troubled  
“ sea when it cannot rest.”

And the fact agrees with this supposition: for an inconsiderable party of men, which had landed in the remotest corner of our island, were, in an instant, increased to that degree, by the multitudes which flowed down upon them from the mountains, that they overpowered one body of our forces; bore down like a torrent upon our country; pierced into the very heart of the kingdom; spread terror and consternation into the metropolis itself; and, “if the Lord himself  
“ had not been on our side; if the Lord  
“ himself



“himself had not been on our side; when  
“they rose up thus against us, must have  
“swallowed us up quick, when their wrath  
“was kindled against us. Then the waters  
“had overwhelmed us, and the stream had  
“gone over our soul. Then the proud  
“waters had,” indeed, “gone over our  
“soul.”

It was then, to continue the figurative expression of the Psalmist, that “the floods  
“lift up their voice, the floods lift up their  
“waves.” Then it was that the overflowings of violence made men afraid, when every age and sex, and condition and degree of men, were equally liable to be overwhelmed in the general confusion. Then it was that “mens hearts began to fail  
“them for fear.” Some apprehensive for the hazard of religion and liberty; others for the loss of honours and of fortunes; many for their friends, most for their children, all for themselves.

When every man's will was his law, to dispute any thing was to run the risque of all. Then was every thing to be dreaded that armed malice could inflict, or defenceless innocence endure.

II. And

II. And this might have been, must inevitably have been, our case; if the Almighty, who alone can govern “the rage of the sea, and the madness of the people,” had not providentially prescribed the same rule to one, which he has naturally prescribed to the other; “thus far shalt thou go, and no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.”

I am sensible that we are too apt to press the immediate aid of Heaven, to unravel the slightest intricacies in the affairs of men; and that every kingdom in its turn, whether oppressing or oppressed, has laid equal claim to the peculiar protection of the Lord of Hosts.

But if there can be a circumstance in which the direct interposition of supernatural assistance be more apparently necessary, and therefore more reasonably to be expected; the imminent destruction of an undesigning state, from the inhuman devices of a subtle adversary, seems to me to be as probable a one as any other.

One may, I think, retain thus much, at least, of Jewish polity, without infringing the common rights of the other nations; to  
imagine



imagine that God himself would evidently (if not visibly) interpose to preserve, I dare not say a favourite, an honest I would say, though, I grant, a deluded people, from the pernicious effects of hostile designs, from the fatal consequences of their own delusions, even with a mighty hand and with a stretched-out arm.

And indeed there is something so remarkable in the circumstances of this event, as seems to confirm that opinion.

To say nothing of those providential gales which have, so often, even against the course of the season, conspired to save us; and which did now, so opportunely, waft over our forces, when we were almost destitute of all defence.

To say nothing of that heaven-infused infatuation into the enemy, which prevented their pressing forward, after their first successes had raised the spirits of their own party, and depressed those of ours.

Was there ever an incident more happy for us, was there ever one that we had less reason to expect, than their precipitate retreat, when they were within a few marches of the city; when the progress they had already

16    *G O D ' s   P r o v i d e n c e   d i s p l a y e d   i n*

ready made increased their desire, as it opened to them the prospect of advancing farther; when, in the insolence of their success, they were breathing vengeance (as the Egyptians once against the children of Israel), “ I will divide the spoil, my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them;” when, by only evading the King’s troops (in which their chief art consisted), they might have been received with open arms by thousands, who wished and prayed for their coming? When we consider as well the natural expedition of mischief, as the peculiar “ swiftness of their feet to shed blood,” we may be sensible how little time was required to have secured themselves by the most valuable hostages; to have massacred millions; to have glutted themselves with rapine and revenge; to have increased their force in the common confusion, and to have made this kingdom one scene of blood.

I see nothing in all this that was not then possible, that we did not at that time apprehend to be so; especially if they had been favoured by the descent so long promised and expected from abroad; the juncture, if ever  
any



any was, to distract our arms, and to divide the kingdom, when our fear of the danger precluded the necessary means for our safety, as preposterously as our contempt of it had done in the beginning.

And that, in this crisis, the most important to these nations, they should be sent back, in an instant, “by the way by which “they came,” to publish their shame, where they had proclaimed their triumph, in a flight as ignominious as their advances had been amazing; was sure, if ever any other event of this kind was so, strictly and properly “the Lord’s doing,” and ought to be “most wonderful in our eyes.”

It is far from my intention to aggravate any thing, nor would I recal your fears any farther than may be necessary to make you more sensible of the blessing of being delivered from them.

But let our gratitude keep pace with our obligations; let our present joy correspond with our past fear; and let our thanksgiving for our deliverance be, at least, as fervent as our wishes have been, as our prayers, to be delivered.

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I shall however mention an incident or two, which, I think, add a greater value to this blessing; and guard you against some errors, which, I hope, will not be intermixed with our thanksgiving.

1. The wise and kind Protector of us all, who is equally wise, equally kind, in what he bestows, and what he withholds from us, has, in my opinion, magnified his mercy towards us, in suspending so long the certainty of our deliverance.

For, in keeping our minds so long balanced, as it were, between hope and fear; nay, in permitting our fears, by the first successes of the enemy, to become so great and general; he did, at the same time, augment the sense of our danger, and of our preservation, and made our victory more dear to us from the stronger apprehensions we had of our destruction. But this is not all.

2. The first successes of the enemy, as they gave encouragement to most of the favourers of that party to make some effort in its support; so, by giving them an opportunity to collect their strength, they have  
made



made their destruction more general, and established more effectually our deliverance.

3. I might add too, in justice, I think, I ought to add, that the reserving the conclusion of this dreadful scene to the Son of our Sovereign (whose name alone was able to counterwork the panic which had been artfully instilled into our forces) has demonstrated to all the world the attachment of the soldiery, and the worth of the General: a General, who has performed the greatest actions in fact, at a time of life when others are only admiring them in the relation; and compleated a character in his earliest youth, which is rarely to be expected but from gray hairs: a circumstance, that must perpetuate our love to that Family, whose hereditary valour is as formidable to the enemies of our peace, as the natural equity and mildness of its government makes it deservedly dear to the friends of liberty. Let his enemies speak the rest of his praise; who involuntarily confess the compleatness of his victory, while they cast the imputation of cruelty upon his pursuing the flight, which was but a just regard to the memory of the dead, a necessary security for the tranquillity of the living.

I shall now guard you against some errors, which, I hope, will have no part in our thanksgiving.

1. Let us learn to distinguish, as much as we can, between our own preservation and the destruction of our enemies; and though we cannot ever be sufficiently thankful for one, let us not shew an unmanly triumph in rejoicing over the other. Revenge is a sign of a little mind, and as unacceptable to God as unbecoming in man. Let no spirit of that sort be mixed with our thanksgiving. The slaughter of so many of our fellow-creatures is only to be justified on the foot of necessity. They were slain, as enemies; let them be remembered, as men.

Would to God, our safety had been consistent with a bloodless victory! But since the magistrate beareth not the sword in vain; since things were brought to that crisis, that destruction was inevitable on one side or the other; let us bless God that we are preserved. But, even while we are pleased with our own success, let us reserve one sentiment of humanity for those unhappy wretches, whose rashness and folly have involved them in irretrievable ruin.

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I shall the less insist upon this caution; because the decent compassion which has appeared in the people for those unhappy few who have already suffered in this cause, though the justice and necessity of their suffering has been universally allowed, has shewn both the generous disposition to forgiveness in our nation, and the singular clemency of that Reign, in which we have been so entirely unacquainted with acts of blood, that we are even startled at the executions of those who have died for introducing them.

2. But I shall warn you against another error, into which we are more likely to run, and which may be attended with worse effects.

Since, by the good Providence of God, we are now entirely free from the danger, let us not be weak enough to imagine that we never were in any. Let us not now begin to fancy that it was impossible for a few desperate ruffians to have effected our destruction, while we confided in the unanimity of the people, the strength of the army, and the conduct of the General. It will be but a bad foundation for our thanksgiving to God, to presume that our blessings might have been secured without him.

The best preservative against such a presumption will be, to consider our deliverance (for a while) as still uncertain; to place ourselves in the situation we were in when our fears were strongest. Not that the reality of things can be altered by what we apprehend of them. But, if those apprehensions were not real, why are we now met here? if they were, let us hold them up in view, till they have reflected a new light upon the present prospect, and convinced us, from the unpleasing aspect of that doubtful scene, that it is both a necessary and a “pleasant thing” “to be thankful.”

3. We may possibly mistake, too, in the manner of expressing our thankfulness upon this great occasion. As the subject of it is no less than the preservation of every thing that can be dear to us on earth, and the object no other than the All-powerful Governor of the universe; our rejoicing should bear some proportion to the importance of one, and to the dignity of the other. I mean not, by this observation, to exclude any just expressions of gratitude to the glorious instrument of our victory. The Sacred Writings themselves will be our warrant for  
acknow-



acknowledging, at the same time, our triumph to be owing “to the sword of the “Lord, and of Gideon.” All that I intend is, that as we now commemorate a day which “the Lord hath” undoubtedly “made, we ought” indisputably “to rejoice and be glad in it;” but let not that gladness be shewn in a giddy round of mirth and wantonness, in successive scenes of intemperance and excess and riot; but in a sober and modest complacency, in the consciousness of having had God for our protector; in contemplating his adorable power; in addressing our thanks to him for his unmerited goodness, and in supplicating the continuance of his protection to us.

This is a joy which will become us; in which the ministring spirits will join with rapture, and which will ascend, as incense, to the throne of God.

Let this be the principal pleasure of the day. Let our souls be satisfied, as it were, “with marrow and fatness, while our “mouths are praising God with joyful “lips.”

4. Let not our gratitude end with the day; let it live as long as we have hearts to

conceive, and breath to express it. Let it become a settled principle of real and uniform virtue in our minds; which is the only method of making this great event a complete blessing to us. God has put the means of happiness in our hands. The application of them he leaves to ourselves: we may punish ourselves, irreparably, by the perverse use of his mercies. The design of all his goodness to us is to lead us to repentance. If it does not produce that effect, it is to be feared it will only serve to aggravate our guilt, and to ascertain our punishment.

We ought to be extremely careful that we do not, by our future ill-conduct, reduce ourselves to such circumstances as may make it reasonable for us to wish we had never been delivered; as may make it more eligible for us to have perished by the sword, than, by protracting our life in the habitual abuse of God's favours, to become more deserved and more signal monuments of his displeasure.

The advantages we receive from Heaven, though they are undoubtedly intended for the encouragement of our virtue and the promotion of our happiness, may be con-



verted into blessings or curses, as we are pleased to use them. We can only make ourselves really happy, by applying them to the ends for which he gave them.

If we are indeed willing to be blessed in the preservation of our Religion, that dear, that inestimable remain of primitive Christianity, so often tried in the fire, yet still coming out more pure and perfect; so long insulted and oppressed, yet still rising under the weight of all its oppressors; at last so powerfully protected, so immoveably established: whose reasonable worship is equally removed from the opposite extremes of superstition and enthusiasm; retaining the decency, without the pomp, of one; preserving the simplicity, without the negligence, of the other. If we do indeed esteem our church to be now any thing more than a name; let us shew it, at least, by not absenting from the public service it prescribes. It matters little what religion we profess, while we cannot persuade ourselves to practise any.

Do we rejoice in that excellent system of Laws so bravely maintained by our forefathers, and so happily transmitted to us;  
securing

26 G O D's *Providence displayed, &c.*

securing at the same time the rights of the sovereign, and the liberties of the people? If we do, let us so use the one, as not to endanger the other: let us not turn our liberty into licentiousness, and make that boasted privilege the source of our misfortune.

God has now saved us from ourselves (from the only power on earth we have reason to fear): let us be guarded on that side for the future; and, if we are truly sensible of the greatness of our deliverance, and willing to express our sense of it, let us extirpate that spirit of discontent and faction from amongst us, which has been the certain, I will not say the intended, cause of all our danger; and which brought our troubles to such a head, as made it necessary to sacrifice one part of the nation to the security, almost to the existence, of the other.

SERMON



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S E R M O N II.

*Distressed Families of Gospel Ministers earnestly recommended.*

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H E B R E W S vi. 10.

*For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*

**T**HE context runs thus: “ Beloved, “ we are persuaded better things of “ you, and things which accompany salvation:” then follows the ground and reason of this persuasion, “ for God is not unrighteous, to forget your work.”

The apostle is clearly of opinion, that God has charged himself so particularly with the salvation of those who have eminently interested themselves in the ministration he describes, that he cannot, without injustice, forget to reward them with it.

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As it is not possible for me to propose, or you to desire, a stronger inducement to practice than this ;

I. I will examine into the characters by which that ministration is described, which the apostle is persuaded is as closely connected with salvation, as justice is with the idea of God.

II. I will enquire upon what ground that persuasion rests, that to suppose God capable of forgetting this service, is to suppose unrighteousness in him.

III. I shall consider how far the business of this day corresponds with the description of the apostle.

The inference will speak itself. For, the nearer your ministration approaches to that described by the apostle, the stronger will your claim be to that salvation which is represented in this case, as not of grace, but of debt.

I. The first character is “ a work and labour of love.”

This is the term by which the writers of the New Testament are used to express all instances of social affection ; every act of kindness, compassion, and charity, the habitual



tual disposition to which, exerted in all possible cases into practice, is represented as “fulfilling the law.” It is a supplement to that wise defect of Providence, which, in the discreet profusion of its gifts, has contrived to put a kind stop to its own bounty, to give us an opportunity of exercising ours. So wisdom is abundantly justified in her dealings with all her children, while the just inequality of God’s natural government lays a lasting foundation for more substantial happiness in the exercise of moral virtues, the occasions of which result from the circumstances of our different stations, and from our mutual connexion with each other.

Hence an agreeable necessity is imposed upon us, in proportion to our several abilities and capacities, to pursue the good of all by administering to their respective exigences, from those instances in which we are made peculiarly to excell; not contracting our powers within the narrow circle of ourselves, but diffusing their influence through the various charities of each relation.

To this end God, who has “set one thing  
“over against another,” has implanted in  
our nature a principle which answers to the  
miseries

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miseries of our fellow-creatures ; is instantly set on work at the sight of their sufferings, and perpetually solliciting us, by a silent but powerful persuasion, to consult our own ease by contributing to theirs.

And, lest engagements, which seem of more importance to us, should turn away our face from the appearance, should stop our ears to the cries, of wretchedness, and bar these avenues of its access to our hearts ; we are called upon, by the precept and example of our blessed Master, to seek out the retreats of calamity ; to lift up the veil of distress ; to go about doing good ; and to be as solicitous to contract intimacies with the unfortunate, as men generally are in declining them.

2. But, though benevolence be the natural principle of charity, and the object of it every man in necessity ; yet the apostle points out a higher and nobler source of this duty, and distinguishes the persons who have the most immediate claim to our regard, when he considers it as “ shewn towards the name “ of Christ,” and administered “ to the wants “ of the saints his servants.” This is the second character ; in which benevolence, though a strong,



strong, is but a secondary, principle, and charity the handmaid to devotion.

The cause of virtue and religion God has been pleased to make his own ; and however he may seem, for the present, to have set the reward and the practice of it at a distance from each other, he cannot be an unconcerned spectator of its tryals. And, as he wants no auxiliaries for the defence of his saints, it ought to be matter of joy and gratitude to us, that he will allow us in any degree to contribute to the protection of those whom he is so nearly and personally concerned to protect.

It is, probably, for this reason amongst others, that he has been pleased to allot any part of this pious work, of this pleasing labour, to our share, to add one virtue more to them in patient suffering, to add one virtue more to us in a generous effort to relieve them.

It is an admired sentiment of a great philosopher, “ that no object upon earth can be “ conceived more worthy of the Divine regard “ than a good man rising under the weight of “ his affliction.” But, by leave of this high authority, I will venture to name another, which I think would appear, at least, as amiable in the eyes of Him who sees all things

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as they are—I mean, “the workings of an “ingenuous mind” until it has raised this very man above the reach of his affliction.”

To relieve virtue, is itself the greatest virtue; and, if there can be a more affecting portrait than virtue smiling in tears, and standing upright under the load of its distress, it must be to see the occasion of it removed by one, who, from the irresistible, when united, principles of love to God and man, is more impatient for the removal of that distress than he who feels it.

A more agreeable spectacle than this cannot be seen, till the good man, who now goes on his way weeping, shall return at last with joy; till God himself, the patron and protector of virtue, shall wipe all tears for ever from the eyes of his suffering servants.

The ministration, then, described and commended by the apostle, as making God debtor to those who diligently discharge it, appears to be “a continued application to relieve  
“the distresses of those particularly who suffer for the promotion of Christianity, not  
“barely from a sense of the miseries they endure, but for the honour of him in whose  
“service



“service they are engaged, and whose cross  
“they eminently bear.”

II. I proceed to enquire, secondly, upon  
what ground the apostle’s persuasion rests,  
that to suppose God capable of forgetting this  
service is to suppose unrighteousness in him.

It might most reasonably be presumed,  
even without any express declaration to that  
purpose, that such a work as this, coinciding  
with, and helping forward, the grand design  
of Providence, the promotion of happiness,  
by the practice of virtue, over all reasonable  
nature, could not pass in its progress unob-  
served, nor be left, in the end, unrewarded by  
Him whose “eyes are over the righteous;”  
and who must delight “in the saints” who  
are in the earth, and in such as “excell in  
“virtue:” and the revelation of Christ Jesus,  
which confirms every natural presumption  
of our reason, has given us the most positive  
assurances, that the case will be as it might,  
previously to that revelation, have been pre-  
sumed it would be; when it not only informs  
us universally, “that with what measure we  
“mete, it shall be measured to us again;” and  
pronounces a general benediction on the mer-  
ciful, declaring that they shall receive, by

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way of recompence, the very “mercy they  
“have shewn:” but also, more particularly  
with regard to the case under immediate con-  
sideration, adds a most explicit promise to the  
point, that he who receiveth a prophet, or  
teacher of religion, upon the foot of his being  
so, shall receive that very prophet’s reward;  
and farther, that he who receiveth a righ-  
teous man, a faithful professor of religion,  
as such, shall receive the very reward  
to which that righteous man had him-  
self a claim; and more extensive still,  
that he who administers the slightest sup-  
port, “even a cup, as it is expressed, of cold  
“water,” to the most inconsiderable subject  
in the kingdom of Christ, as to a servant of  
him, shall by no means lose his reward.

Nay, we have yet another declaration  
from the blessed Saviour and Judge of men,  
more solemn, and, if possible, more strong in  
our favour than any of the former, that he  
will, at his final decision on the affairs of the  
moral world, when he shall proportion each  
man’s reward to his work, consider every  
act in support of religion, and the distres-  
sed professors of it, as if it had been done to  
himself. “In as much as ye have done your  
“several



“several works of love to the least of these  
“my brethren, ye have done them unto  
“ME. Enter you into the joy of your Lord.”

Most reasonable, therefore, does the apostle’s presumption appear to be, “that God  
“would not be righteous,” if, after such express, such repeated promises, he could forget to confer the reward he has promised on those who continue their attention to relieve the wants of men engaged in the interests of religion, in pursuance of the principle he has implanted in their nature, in obedience to his particular recommendation and command.

III. It remains only to be considered, thirdly, how far the occasion of this anniversary is connected with the description of the apostle.

I. The business of this day carries in its very aspect the fairest pretension to the first part of the apostle’s description, as “a work  
“and labour of love.” For amongst the many kinds of provision for the innumerable instances of wretchedness to which we are unavoidably subjected, by the various infirmities, and infinite contingencies, incident to our nature and circumstances, there is,

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perhaps, scarce one which, when we attend closely to every particular difficulty of the case, will be found to alleviate more real misery, or contribute more to the lasting benefit of mankind, than this before us, if the means were in any tolerable degree proportioned to the end.

It must be acknowledged, to the eternal honour of this nation, that it is scarce possible, on the most cursory survey of its flourishing capital, and the places round it, not to be struck with pleasure and astonishment at the many large and magnificent edifices, monuments of royal or of private bounty, devoted to the uses of piety and beneficence, exceeding any thing of the kind in any other country, and almost equal to the several exigences of mankind; some long ago erected, some lately finished, some yet projected and designed; in which, as in so many temples, the "sacrifices of righteousness" are daily offered, sacrifices with which "God is well pleased!"

Here the age and inability of those whose youth and strength have been consumed in the service of their country find a retreat and repose; here the wretched relicts of



those who have died in its defence, subsistence and relief; here the distressed, but not dishonest, merchant rests securely in one safe harbour, beyond the hazard of rocks and seas; here infants exposed, or deserted, by their parents are adopted by the public; here remedies and mitigations are applied to sickness and pain, and to every shape of each; here the poor, but virtuous, matron is better accommodated than her own narrow lodging will admit, in the particular exigence of her sex; here tranquillity and tenor is restored to the disconcerted and distracted mind; here comfort is administered, as far as may be done, to the lamentable state of those whose case is presumed to be beyond all hope of cure; here an useful and ample provision is made for the instruction of the ignorant, the correction and reformation of the vicious, the promotion of industry, the improvement of knowledge and virtue and religion.

Many excellent things have been justly spoken of these several institutions; yet allow me to say to the founder and promoter of this, "Though many men have done excellently, "yet thou excellest them all!" And let me

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add, in a strong degree of hope at least, that "the Lord loveth the gates of this our " Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."

And from this venerable appearance of persons in the highest stations, and whose virtues add dignity to their stations; from this numerous concourse of multitudes in every rank and degree; a fair presumption arises, and a pleasing prospect, that, under the countenance of their authority, and by the support of their assistance, it may go from strength to strength, till it exceed every other institution, as much in perfection, as it originally did in the excellence of its design.

The principal objects of this ministration are widows and orphans, persons, each, whom nature has placed in the foremost rank of distress, whom God has been pleased to recommend to the first place in our compassion. The circumstances of their case so affecting, that God himself could devise no stronger argument to deter the profane from the violation of his law, than to set before his eyes the dreadful prospect of "leaving his children " fatherless, and his wife a widow." Apprehensions so shocking, that nothing can be added to



to the horror of them, but that which it is the happy employment of this assembly to provide against and prevent, that they should “become vagabonds and beg their bread, and “that there should be no man to have compassion on the fatherless children.”

To the irreparable loss of comfort and counsel, by the dissolution of the endearing relation of husband and parent, we must add the equally helpless, though quite opposite, extremes of age and infancy in some; of a mind impaired by the violence of the shock in many; of infirmity in most; of extreme poverty in all. The last, again, more sensibly felt, when it succeeds hastily, as it sometimes does, to a state removed one comfortable degree from immediate necessity and want.

There are two very different stations, whose circumstances carry in themselves a present alleviation to the miseries of these unhappy persons: the first of those who, by continuing still in the possession of an affluent fortune; the second of those who, never having been possessed of any, feel no change in their œconomy from a change in their condition. But the more wretched objects

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for whom we plead, by lying in the middle of these two extremes, have all the affliction which is common to both, without any of the advantage which arises from either. They neither rejoice in the easy affluence of one, nor rest in the happy insensibility of the other; they have had just experience enough of better days to make the evil one less tolerable; and what might have contributed to their consolation, if it had remained, being added to their loss, makes that which would have been afflicting enough in any case almost absolutely insupportable in theirs.

Their very habitation becomes void by the death of their only support, and a stranger must dwell in their tents. The sentence, more justly pronounced as a rod on the impious, is preposterously fallen into the lot of the righteous: "The place thereof shall know them no more! Thou shalt look after their place, but they shall be away!"

The little community, which depended upon the slender thread of a single life, is dissolved when that is broke; and those sons and daughters whom they had nursed up as young plants, and were preparing to adorn "as the polished corners of the temple," are now  
hur-



hurried into captivity ; a captivity as real, and as unavoidable from necessity, as any in which they might have been involved by the law of arms.

And it should be the strongest incentive to our pity, though it be no addition to their misery, that it is not the effect of their folly.

In short, the loss of the person on whose protection and conduct they could have most securely relied, accompanied with the absence of every convenience which might have consoled them under that loss ; poverty aggravated by infirmity of body and mind, with the united impotence of age and infancy ; are burthens only to be endured by those who least deserve to bear them !

But no words can express, no colours paint, their misery ! Go, “ visit the fatherless “ and widow in their affliction !” Even there unable to know, what they only who feel can know, the whole of their distress ! Let us enter, however, for a moment this house of mourning : there see the widow matron oppressed with sorrow, with poverty, with infirmity, with perplexity, with age ! whose virtues, having been at first her dower,

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dower, are now become her last resource; in patience equal, in strength inferior, to her sufferings; lamenting the tender partner of her lot, whose union to her nothing but death could divide, whose presence added to every pleasure, whose persuasion abated every pain: for these things she weeps; her eyes run down with water, because the comforter who should relieve her soul is far from her, and her children are desolate!

The very innocence of her little ones, formerly the crown of her rejoicing while she was able to conduct them under her eye, now serves to increase the bitterness of her soul, when she reflects on the difficulties they may engage after they are separated from her care: these two things are come upon her, in a moment, in one day, widowhood and worse than the loss of children; children, whom she is obliged to expose to danger to preserve from famine! whose engaging forms may light the way to their destruction; whose artless manners may assist to compleat their ruin!

Hear her, in a circumstance not unlike that which overcast the triumph of the afflicted conqueror of Ammon, bewail her misery in  
terms



terms like his:—"Alas! my sons and daughters, you have brought me very low, even "you are of the number of those who trouble me!"

What now, but that indelible sense of Providence, inspired by the instruction, and improved by the example, of him whose memory is dear to her, can restrain her from crying out, "Blessed are the barren! the "womb which never bore! and the breast "which never gave suck!"

See her, instantly forced to quit with regret, the long-loved mansion, the scene of all her joys, that sanctuary in all her distress, and the neat improvements her scanty fortune would allow, to the possession of another master.

The few venerable volumes, which, next to herself, were the source of their pious owner's satisfaction, and the solace of his cares, carried away, without money, and without price, by those who rate not their value by their use.

The fewer friendships she had contracted, by a confined, though constant beneficence, now ready to fall with the foundation on which they were raised. To dig unable, and to beg ashamed,

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ashamed, she is reduced to try new connexions in a time the worst for seeking them, in age and infirmity; with an argument the worst for expecting them, the want of assistance and relief; herself and her infants destitute of every hope, but that which this friendly refuge can inspire!

Does humanity acknowledge a stronger claim to its compassion? can charity desire a more proper object on which it may exercise the work and labour of its love? Let the prosperous look here, and check the intemperance of their joy, by reflecting on distresses which might have been, which may yet be, their own! Let the wretched look here, and draw some suspension of their grief, from the sight of sorrow so far exceeding theirs!

2. Yet these claims to our regard will receive an additional strength, when to the miseries of the immediate objects we add the sufferings and virtues of those from whom they derive both. In this view the offices of humanity will be bound upon us by the cords of religion. If to neglect them before was injustice, not to perform them now is sacrilege. The plea arising from their misery  
is



is heightened by the cause in which they endure it.

While the good man is exhausting his spirits, and consuming his strength, in the constant service of God and his Christ; in an unwearied endeavour to promote piety and virtue and good-will towards men; by pressing exhortations to duty, illustrated and enforced by the plain and persuasive doctrine of his own example; by instilling early principles into yet untinctured minds, the certain source of private happiness, the lasting security of public peace; by watching those favourable opportunities of address, when some desirable disorder, some useful disaster, having stopped men short in the pursuits of folly, incline them to attend to the call of reason; by pouring oil into the wounds of the desponding mind, and infusing wholesome terrors into the breast of the presumptuous; ought he not to be very highly esteemed in love for his work's sake? a work as eminently useful to the community, as it is generally prejudicial to the unhappy labourer; who is, worthy, indeed, of his hire, but how rarely does he receive the reward he deserves! though God never can be, yet man too often is,

“ un-

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“ unrighteous to forget this work and labour  
“ of his love !” He rises early, and late takes  
rest, and eats the bread of carefulness, nay is  
sometimes in a worse condition than that  
which the primitive curse inflicted upon fal-  
len man, in the sweat of his brow unsatisfied  
with bread.

The too constant recompence he receives  
from an unthankful world is, to be defrauded  
of the little he is not able to defend ; and to  
find his not having, made the occasion of ta-  
king from him even that which he has. May  
he not take up the words of his suffering  
Master, and say, “ Many good works have  
“ I done amongst you ; for which of these do  
“ you starve me !”

Secluded from reaping the fruits of his own  
industry, and ill-repaid by those to whom he  
dedicates his labour, he combats with poverty,  
without any other arms but patience ; with re-  
proach, without any other return but prayer.  
“ And though all this be come upon him,  
“ yet has he not forsaken the law of his God,  
“ nor behaved himself frowardly in his cove-  
“ nant.”

If his own personal poverty and reproach  
were all he had to struggle with, he would blush  
to



to decline bearing what the Captain of his salvation bore. A nearer concern affects him, one always most deeply rooted in the most ingenuous mind, the concern for his posterity ! a concern sanctified by the pattern of his great Exemplar, who retained his affection for those whom he once loved to the last ; when he was obliged to leave them orphans, had prepared to send a Comforter ; and with his last breath recommended the care of one widow to his beloved Disciple.

The tender regard for the objects of his care obliges him frequently to add to the anxiety he feels by an honest effort to suppress it. He literally bears the infirmities of others, and labours under sorrows which are not his own, while he anticipates in his foreboding heart the future affliction of his family, when “ the bridegroom shall be taken from them, “ and then they shall weep in those days ! ”

This is the consideration which swallows up all the rest ; which, though he is commanded to bear as a Christian, he is not forbid to feel as a man. This drinks up his spirits, and interrupts him in the prosecution of his sacred task.

Let

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Let it be your endeavour to make this yoke easy, and this burthen light ; that those good men who do not yet rest from their labours may see this day afar off, and be glad ; that, in the midst of the sorrows which they have in their hearts, this comfortable expectation may refresh their souls !

Let their services and their sufferings, the importance of their office, and the difficulties they lie under in the discharge of it, plead successfully in their favour, and in the behalf of those who are dearer to them than themselves ; who may amply repay the assistance they receive from you, by diffusing the principles they have imbibed in their infancy ; and become instruments in the hand of Providence, of disseminating Christianity through the families into which they are thrown ; as the captive damsel once directed the haughty Syrian to the prophet in Israel.

While you thus “ minister to the saints,” you contribute to support that religion which they profess, or which they teach. By lightening their burthens, you enable them with more ease to perform their business. You add yourselves to the nation of priests ; have the  
merit,



merit, without the hardship, of being preachers of righteousness; and, having assisted the prophet in the execution of his office, shall hereafter by the Divine justice be made partakers of his reward.

Go on then to minister, as you have ministered, till you have raised, upon the foundation laid by princes, by prelates, by persons of more imitable beneficence, a perfect work! that this institution may continue no longer like the confined cure at the pool of Bethesda, where the first that was admitted, exhausting all the virtue, defeated the weary expectations of those who lay behind;—but resemble, in some degree, the unrestrained power of that Master to whose service it is appropriated, whose healing energy dispeopled countries of their diseased;—when “as many  
“as could touch but the hem of his garment  
“were made perfectly whole.”

So shall this stain of our reformation be effectually wiped off; and, while the unfruitful works of monkish darkness lie skreened under the secrecy in which they were contrived, and buried in the cloysters in which they were committed, these holy men, who have contributed to reform mankind not less

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50     *Distressed Families recommended.*

by the virtues of their posterity than their own, may never “ be ashamed when they speak “ with their enemies in the gate.”

You have seen the nature of the duty described by the apostle ; you know the reward which is annexed to its performance ; you have seen the correspondence between this and that ministration. It would be a reflexion upon the principles of your nature and your religion, to press your attention any farther to a cause which must have as many advocates as there are men, as many supporters as there are Christians.

I shall conclude with reminding you of the argument with which we first set out, that God himself takes account of their desolation ; and while he, in mercy, puts their tears into his vial, and minutes every sigh, as it escapes, in the book of his remembrance, you may figure him to yourselves even now, with equal justice, recording your sincere and not unsuccessful endeavours ; incapable of forgetting your concern, your care, the generous work, and not lost labour of your love.

“ Be ye therefore stedfast, immoveable,  
“ always abounding in this work of the Lord,  
“ for as much as ye know that your labour is  
“ not in vain in the Lord !”     Amen.



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S E R M O N III.

*A Propensity to Pleasure an Obstacle  
to Charity.*

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2 T I M O T H Y iii. 4.

*Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.*

**W**E have so strong a call upon us from nature, so plain a command from revelation, “to do good and to communicate,” that no man can be deaf to one, no Christian can be ignorant of the other. If, therefore, nothing more were wanting to engage mankind in the constant and cordial exercise of this virtue, than to convince us of the propriety of it as we are men, of the necessity of it as we are Christians; the business of this day’s meeting would be already done to our hands. For how few are there, if there be any, in this numerous assembly, who will withhold their charity merely because they

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are

are not convinced of both these obligations upon them to bestow it ?

Some indeed, who acknowledge the obligation, and are not averse to comply with it in general, may possibly suppose that it may be as punctually performed, and the end of it as religiously answered, by some secret methods of dispensing their liberality, as it can be by this or by any other public conveyance : but with such persons, who are sincerely disposed to bestow their alms somewhere, we shall have no great difficulty to bring their contributions into some public fund; not only as it is clear that both methods are perfectly consistent with each other, but also, as much more good may evidently be done by a private person who throws the little he has to spare into a common stock, than the same person can be supposed to be able to do while he keeps his proportion by itself, and separate from that of others ; because detached charities, however numerous, are but like so many single drops of rain, which for that very reason fall unperceived and without effect : while collective ones, by running one into another, descend as a plenteous shower, enlivening the country as it spreads, and



and making the little hills to rejoice on every side.

There may again be others, who make no doubt that public munificence is better calculated to diffuse good than many private acts of it can be, who, notwithstanding that, may give the preference to some other public method of conveying their benevolence to their fellow creatures to this which is under consideration.

I think we need not despair of bringing over even most of these to our party: for to these persons, besides the advantages common to this with other hospitals, we can produce one, and that not the least considerable, which is almost peculiar to our own; the case of indigent and honest matrons, in that exigence of their sex in which they greatly want and highly deserve our most tender regard. This is a concern which comes home to the business and the bosom of all men: one half of mankind cannot but have the most lively sense of sorrows to which they are all subject, and which many of them have already felt; and the other half lie, if possible, under stronger obligations to make this circumstance as easy to the sufferers as

it can be made, who share in all the advantages arising from it, without being liable to many of the inconveniences which attend it.

Every woman carries an advocate in her breast, which is now pleading this cause within her with irresistible force ; and every man, who has no nearer argument for his compassion, will at least pay his tribute of gratitude here to his mother's pangs ; in honour to the womb which bore him ; in remembrance and return for the fond attention he engaged while he was hanging yet upon his mother's breast !

I do take it for granted then, that there is not a person here who wants to be informed that to do good in general is his duty ; imprinted upon his nature by the finger of his Maker, and bound upon his soul by the injunction of his Redeemer ; that the very power of doing it is an admonition to him to see it done ; and even a greater charity to himself than to those who must receive it through his hands ; that private acts of beneficence are no bars to the public exercise of it ; that a little thrown into this channel may in some respects better answer the end  
he



he proposes than it can by being divided from it; and farther, that this very institution is as well calculated in all instances as most, in one better than any, to dispense the offices of mercy to mankind.

What then is there wanting to fulfil the purposes of our being met together at this time in this place? Why, if all that we desired were to have men speak well of our charity, and wish well to it, very little would be wanting. For what man is there so hard of heart, who would not make all the bones that are broken to rejoice, if he could do it by a word? who would not annihilate poverty and sickness and pain, if it could be done by a wish? But something more than this is requisite here. Your charity is to be supported, in order to make it proportionable to the noble and extensive end at which it aims; and, till we find men as ready to communicate as they are to commend, we fall short of the business of this solemnity. Here lies the difficulty: and I fear it is a difficulty which it will require more words than I am master of to remove.

When we come to the point, we may possibly have as many excuses to encounter as the

good man had in the parable! Where one had made a purchase of an estate, it would be unreasonable to expect any thing from him! Another a set of cattle of some kind, it were pity that charity should interfere in so pressing an occasion of his own! A third has increased the expences of his family by marrying a wife, and it would be cruel not to have him excused!

Now the plea of necessity, where it is real, is an unexceptionable excuse. A man's family ought, according to every law human and divine, to be his first and chief concern: whatever is necessary to their support is an act of justice, which must always take the right hand of charity. Nor would I be so rigorous a casuist as to confine your regard for your families meerly to what we call the necessities of life: let nothing be subtracted from them that can in any sense contribute to their felicity! If I exhort you to retrench a little from that expence which is at present laid out to their hurt, and your own; you will forgive me this wrong. Be persuaded only to sacrifice your follies on the altar of charity; be content barely to allow some part of that to the relief of misery, which  
you



you now squander away profusely in the service of vice and vanity, that you may avoid the monstrous character in the text, of being "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God!"

The love of pleasure is confessed to be the prevailing and characteristic turn of this age and nation. It has infected persons of all ranks, and is become almost the very business and employment of life; and this I take to be the greatest obstruction to charity. It is an obstruction to it in two respects. First, as it indisposes the mind from attending to cases of compassion; and secondly, as it takes away the power of relieving them. That dissipation of thought, which results from a round of vanity and imaginary joy, takes off our attention from matters of real concern; and the long train of expences into which it unavoidably hurries us, cuts off our ability of supplying the natural wants of others, by creating an endless number of chimerical necessities to ourselves.

It will be to little purpose to excite men to give liberally to this or any other charity, so long as they have nothing to spare; and that will always be the case as long as the

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rage for pleasure is the ruling disposition amongst us. As that subsides, men will find their necessities to vanish in proportion, and will no longer be at a loss where to have to give to him that needeth.

Nor think that this is a lecture of some four enthusiast, who would deprive you of the pleasures you are allowed to enjoy : it is the language of the best-natured philosophy that was ever taught amongst men—it is the voice of that school whose very first principle was “Peace on earth, good-will towards “men.” Entertain no distrust of what addresses you with so ingenuous an aspect. This argument shall debar you of no pleasure which is consistent with your duty or your safety ; of none but such as are unworthy your pursuit, as it will be your advantage to lose. By removing this obstacle, we shall be able to raise a fund for public benefit out of the ruins of private vice ; and you will have it in your power to promote your happiness, and that of many, by those very means which are now preposterously applied to your destruction.



In order to do what in me lies to encourage you to make so advantageous an exchange, I shall represent to you the pernicious tendency of that love of pleasure which is inconsistent with the love of God; by shewing you, from the apostle's authority, the wretched consequences and companions of it.

“ In the last days, says he, perilous times  
“ shall come; for men shall be lovers of them-  
“ selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers,  
“ disobedient to parents, unthankful,  
“ unjust, without natural affection, truce-  
“ breakers, false-accusers, incontinent, fierce,  
“ despisers of that which is good, traitors,  
“ heady, high-minded—lovers of pleasure  
“ more than lovers of God.”

They must be dangerous days indeed in which such iniquities do abound; and does not the description appear too prophetic of our own! And these are the consequences of substituting the love of pleasure in the room of the love of God: for so they are considered by this very apostle in his epistle to the Romans, where a like black catalogue appears, and is expressly said to be the natural  
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or judicial effect of not acknowledging God :  
for which reason, God is said to have “ given  
“ them up to an undiscerning mind, to do  
“ those things which are not convenient ;  
“ being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication,  
“ wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness ; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit,  
“ malignity ; whisperers, back-biters, haters of  
“ God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors  
“ of evil things, disobedient to parents, without  
“ understanding, covenant-breakers,  
“ without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.”

The time would fail us to examine every particular in this horrid charge ; to trace every little stream to that impure fountain from which it flows : I shall content myself with noting some of those glaring instances in which your own experience will give testimony to the truth of the apostle’s observation, that they are almost inseparably connected with the love of pleasure.

- I. Hatred of God.
- II. Disobedience to parents.
- III. Want of natural affection.
- IV. The invention of evil things.
- V. Covetousness.

VI. Dis-



VI. Disregard to covenants ; and, to close the scene,

VII. Murder, perhaps of themselves !

I. Hatred of God is considered by the apostle as a consequence of preferring the love of pleasure to the love of him ! And it cannot well be otherwise ; for opposite principles must of course destroy each other. It is as impossible to love, as it is to serve, both God and mammon. The worse principle can only take place in proportion as the better is quieted and subdued : to this end, all private reflection upon his nature, and our dependence upon him, is to be dropped. The public occasions of acknowledging his providence, and invoking his assistance, being so many uneasy interruptions to our pursuits, are to be declined, or attended with an indifference more criminal, if possible, than our absence : the very form of giving thanks for the daily support we receive at his hand (the only difference between the feeding of a man and a brute) must be banished from our tables ; and every thing which might in any sort contribute to keep alive any spark of Divinity in our minds is to be extinguished, till we can go on in a wretched security, in  
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a miserable insensibility of Providence, and without God in the world.

II. The first table being thus broke in pieces by setting up an idol in our hearts, it is no wonder if the work go briskly on, in making as free with the principal command of the second table. What are all the remonstrances of a parent, to one who is already deaf to the voice of God? Imperious pleasure hears no reproof, brooks no restraint. The suggestions of reason are ridiculed as the dreams of dotage. Advice is overruled by art, or overthrown by force. The call of inclination is to be obeyed, in opposition to every interest. Ah! wretched mother, whose child is a slave to pleasure! The pangs she endured at his birth were more tolerable than those she must endure in foreboding his destruction: this he takes pains to complete before his time, and brings her grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

III. Nor are the children more happy where this disease has infected the parent. Natural affection gives way, where an eager pursuit of diversions has taken the lead. The cries of a family at home are drowned in the importunity of pleasure abroad. The fiercest



cest animals have a more anxious care for their offspring than men who are devoted to gaiety and expence. How many have we seen begging that bread which was wantonly thrown away by the luxury of an unfeeling parent ! left by his extravagance without subsistence, and by his neglect without any honest method of acquiring it !

IV. It seems strange at first, that covetousness should have any connexion with profuseness ; and that two characters, so apparently opposite, should ever be brought to unite. But so we see it is ; and the reason of it, too, may be seen : for the one makes the other necessary. The wants of the prodigal being endless, his desires are so too. His avarice is the creature of his excess.

V. The invention of evil things makes an essential ingredient in the life of the men of pleasure ! It is the fertile parent of all their short-lived joys ; the inexhaustible fountain of all their wants and sorrows ! That infinite variety in dress, in diet, in furniture, in equipage, in every imaginable refinement which idle luxury and vicious taste can suggest, or that ever-varying thing called Fashion  
compre-

comprehend, creates a necessity, which, being the child of caprice, is as volatile and various as its airy parent, and admits of no bound while there is an imagination to be formed beyond it.

VI. What cannot such an appetite digest? What supplies can be sufficient for such a disposition, which lays an intolerable tax upon a great estate, and brings inevitable destruction upon a small one? Fraud and forgery are too often called in, to satisfy the demands of vanity and extravagance: the sacred ties of justice, of friendship, of affection, must all make way before the predominant love of pleasure—this necessity has no law.—The widow's dower, the orphan's right, deck out the triumph of the insatiable tyrant. One unlucky cast is to be redeemed by a thousand methods of deceit; and when all these are found insufficient to extricate the man of pleasure from the difficulties in which he has involved himself—"the latter end of that man is worse than the beginning."

VII. He is obliged for once to retire into himself—but what unwelcome company to receive him there! The recollection of every guilty pleasure he has been pursuing, of every



every iniquitous method by which he has supported himself in the pursuit, now bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder. No dungeon can be so dreadful to him as the retirement into his own corrupted heart! All the natural evils which can befall humanity are a light burden, when compared with the intolerable ferment in his mind. Having no rest in himself, no refuge in his God, this world is a scene of confusion to him, the next of horror. Unable, however, to remove or relieve his present anguish, he seeks for respite in futurity. To secure himself from the consciousness of the wretched part he has been acting, he has recourse to the only crime, perhaps, he has not yet committed, to the only one, at least, of which he can never repent, by putting a violent end to his anxiety and to his life together.

Horrid infatuation! what murderer hurries before the tribunal of his judge with the reeking marks of his guilt upon him!

Look here, ye filken sons of pleasure! ye votaries of miserable delight! shed one penitential tear over the bier of your departed friends. Think at last, before it be too late, what those who once trod the same giddy

maze in which you are now bewildered, disciples once, perhaps masters, in that execrable school where the doctrine of chance is the one thing necessary to be known—think, let me intreat you, in this your day, what they would give to endure your reproaches, of which they were most afraid; to perform those acts of piety and charity to which they were most averse!

“ Quàm vellent æthere in alto

“ Nunc & pauperiem & duros perferre labores!”

If they could bespeak you now, their words, I make no doubt, would have some weight with you—hear then from me what they would say: “ Alas, my brethren, into  
 “ what a fatal circle have you been amused!  
 “ This is not the way, walk not in it. The  
 “ God of this world now blinds your eyes as  
 “ it once did ours—turn unto the Lord  
 “ while he may be found. If you seek to  
 “ please men, or yourselves, you cannot be  
 “ the servants of God. He sent you upon  
 “ another errand than that in which you are  
 “ so deeply engaged; though the phantoms  
 “ you are pursuing will vanish into air, the  
 “ ruin in which they will involve you is real  
 “ and unavoidable. If we could open to

“ you



“ you the world to come, we should do no  
“ more than is already done in the gospel; if  
“ you will not receive instruction from  
“ thence, you must abide by the penalty of  
“ those who reject it.”

O consider this ye that forget God, lest  
he pluck you away, and there be none to  
deliver you! sad effects of that love of plea-  
sure which is founded on the loss of piety  
and the love of God! enough to deter us  
from any commerce with the parent of so  
frightful an offspring!

Thus I have endeavoured to shew, as I  
proposed, the pernicious tendency of that  
love of pleasure which is inconsistent with  
the love of God; the real distress and pressing  
necessity in which it involves those who are  
unhappily brought under its dominion.

I have shewn you that the apostle's ac-  
count of this matter (as far as the time would  
allow us to trace it) runs parallel to our own  
experience—and I hope the united influence  
of his authority, and your own conviction,  
will help strongly to wean you from the im-  
moderate pursuit of pleasures, which, as they  
take their rise in vanity, proceed in misery,  
and terminate in destruction.

It has been my chief business to make this point sufficiently clear to you, not only on account of its general utility, but particularly as it stands connected with the occasion of our present meeting—because, as I told you in the beginning, the love of pleasure, where it takes fast hold, seems to me to be the greatest obstruction to charity; and it would have been in vain for me to call for your assistance in this or any other case of compassion, so long as you remain under the power of a principle which has so many urgent demands upon you; and is so rigid an exacter of its claims, as not to let you go till you have paid the uttermost farthing.

I did conceive, that it would be to little purpose for me to represent the use and excellence of your institution, the increase of your burden as your reputation increases, the integrity, and prudence, and generosity of your governors, the extent and convenience of the edifice you have raised for the reception of your people; and the additional expence into which the desire of rendering it as useful and commodious as possible has carried you, beyond what you were enabled to contract for—I did conceive, I say, that

it



it would be to little purpose to lay these matters before men who were already retained in another cause, and who were taxed by their vanity to the extent of their fortune.

It appeared to me, therefore, to be more reasonable, to set out with shewing persons of this complexion a method by which they might be at the same time enabled to prevent their own necessities, and to supply those of other men---by reducing imaginary wants, and by giving up nothing but their vices and their wrong judgement.

The whole business of this discourse is by this means reduced into a very narrow compass—to this single question—whether the persons to whom it is addressed will chuse to part with their folly or their humanity? whether they will do good to others, or an injury to themselves! whether they will serve God or mammon!

Suppose only, that your Redeemer were here in person, recommending these sick, and lame, and poor, and afflicted, as proper objects of your concern and relief; durst any one amongst you avow the real reason why you refuse to relieve them? durst any of you say, We would willingly comply

70 *A Propensity to Pleasure, &c.*

with thy request, O Lord, if we were not previously engaged to the theatre, to the tavern, the hazard-table, or if there be any name amongst you less reputable than any of these?

Consider then that, in the issue, it must come to this. Suffer not yourselves now to be guided by a motive, which will not support you when it is brought to the test.

Let your love of pleasure give way to the only principles which can give you perpetual assurance, the love of God and man.

SERMON



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S E R M O N IV.

*Some Objections to the established  
Liturgy answered.*

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T I T U S i. 9.

*Holding fast the faithful word, as he hath  
been taught, that he may be able by sound  
doctrine both to exhort and to convince the  
gainfayers.*

**T**HE first concern of those who direct  
in the church of Christ should be,  
“to hold fast the faithful word;” and the  
consequences of this will be as they are re-  
presented by the apostle: 1st, that by the  
soundness of their doctrine they will be able  
to exhort; 2dly, that by the same means  
they will be able to convince the gainfayers.

To this point the reformers of our church  
paid their first attention, when they made  
the holy scriptures the foundation, the rule,  
and the test, of their reformation. And as  
they compiled our public service on this plan

with as much wisdom as could well be expected from human imperfection, with the degree of light, and in the doubtful circumstances, of that time; so it has remained to this age of clearer discovery a monument of their great piety and moderation; still capable of affording matter of exhortation to those who are trained up in our communion, and not leaving its ministers unable, nor unprepared, to return an answer to those who require a reason of its injunctions, with meekness and without disrespect.

The first of these is, I own, the more agreeable office; the latter, however, is become a necessary one. For, since objections to our liturgy have been laid before the public, I see no middle way, in a public defence of our common prayer, but to answer, or to allow them. But many of them seem to me not to have been sufficiently digested. I shall therefore give my reasons for thinking so; not in the spirit of controversy, but with the same temper in which the objections themselves are made; having first considered the arguments which are proposed for contracting our service.



It is thought then, "that the length of  
"our public service (especially on Sunday-  
"mornings) may be in some reasonable  
"measure contracted; and that it may be  
"expedient, on many accounts, to contract  
"it." And the consideration which moves  
to this is "the indevotion and coolness of  
"the present age, which there is reason to  
"think the length of our service does not  
"contribute to lessen!\*"

Though coolness in devotion be, I confess, a very glaring, and, I fear, a characteristic vice of this age and nation; yet it is far from being clear that the length of our public services does in any degree contribute to cool men's devotion, or that making it shorter would be in any measure instrumental in kindling that comfortable warmth within them: coolness in devotion is evidently an indisposition in the mind, and the correction should undoubtedly begin in the part which is indisposed. Where a person comes to prayer without a disposition to pray, the shortest form you can devise will appear too long; and I am not sure that our public ser-

\* Chap. II. Page 22.

vice would not be tedious to such a man, even though the liturgy were reduced to an ejaculation. A very delicate appetite may be disgusted at a very scanty provision; but which is to be removed, your dinner or my delicacy! for it is to be considered that we are speaking of a common prayer, which is a provision for all: and though some may think a very little too much, there may be others who may find a great deal too little; and whether do you judge it most reasonable to starve the hungry, or to offend the dainty? Let men of reason consider and determine.

But if it should be judged expedient to contract the service at some time, I can by no means be inclined to think that Sunday-morning would be the proper time for doing it: there can be no invincible reason, sure, for supposing any part of that day too much to be employed in religious exercise, the whole of which is appropriated, by the interruption of every other less necessary work, to immediate acts of piety and devotion.

It is said further, “that there are some  
“ seasons of the year which may render the  
“ present length of our service incommodi-  
“ ous



“ous to many even of those who are the best  
“disposed amongst us, and the best affected  
“to our form of worship\*.”

Now the time which the ordinary service of the Sunday-morning takes up, exclusive of musical interludes and the sermon, does not much exceed an hour, even with a reader that is not precipitate; and that, to persons who are in such a degree of strength and health as the generality of mankind are presumed to be, can hardly be reckoned to transgress the bounds of common convenience. With those who find so small a portion of time incommodious for their attendance on the public worship, may we not reasonably expostulate, as our blessed Lord is said once to have done with his weary disciples, “Can you not pray with me one hour?”

Besides, it is evident and notorious that the severest seasons do not prevent persons of all ages, and almost with all infirmities, from frequenting other assemblies, which are of a longer continuance than the longest of our Sunday-morning services, even not excluding the organ, or the sermon. What rea-

\* Chap. II. Page 22.

son,

son, then, will the most candid inquirer suggest, why men shall find themselves more incommoded in our churches, than in other places of resort, which take up the same, or a larger, share of their time, but this only, that the entertainments which are exhibited at one are more adapted to their taste than the duties which are performed in the other?

And if this plea appears to be unsatisfactory at any time, much less, as I said before, will it satisfy considerate men on those days which are set apart by God and man for the purposes of religion; especially when the indevotion and coolness of the present age are taken into the account, and the manner in which men's time is too generally employed on that day, when they are discharged from the service of the church.

I cannot, therefore, join in the wish which those persons (however well-disposed they are said to be, or well-affected to our form of worship) have been observed on repeated occasions to express, "that our morning service (on Sundays especially) were reduced within more reasonable bounds" — because it seems to me to be already within very reasonable bounds for the body  
of



of mankind; and particular cases (for I allow there may be such) ought not, in equity, to be made the standard for general use.

It is added, “ that there is reason to think “ that both services would then not only be “ more frequented, but performed with “ greater devotion\*.” By *both services*, I presume, are meant the morning service, which is supposed to be too long, and the afternoon service, which is confessed to be short enough. Now I cannot clearly see how both services will be more frequented by the reduction of the morning service: for, as the reason assigned for the service’s not being frequented is the length of it, the reducing the morning service can be no sort of reason why the evening service should be more frequented than it was before, because that is allowed to continue exactly of the same length of which it has always been.

Nor can I discover any necessity of the longest present service being performed with less devotion than it ought to be, when I reflect that it does not keep the mind on the

\* Chap. II. Page 22.

stretch in one continued act of prayer, but is interspersed with psalms, with hymns, with lessons of various instruction, which afford frequent pauses and relief to those who are most intent upon the duties of the day, and supply a variety of arguments to awaken the attention of those who are apt to be most indifferent about them.

Farther, as to the greater degree of devotion with which the shortening of the service will make it be attended to, is it not obvious to ask; if reducing it a fourth, for instance, would improve us much in that respect, would not the reducing it to half, by the same rule, make us as devout again? and if so, why may we not be able, by reducing it three fourths, to exalt men's devotion to an extacy?

I will proceed with the objection——“ If  
“ we should farther say, that the length of  
“ the service may sometimes be the accidental occasion of too much hurrying, if  
“ not also of curtailing, in the common  
“ course of reading it (both which have been  
“ complained of), we hope we have a fair  
“ title to pardon both from those who would  
“ keep up the solemnity of the worship, and  
“ those



“those who, on such occasion, do unhappily, we say not wilfully, degrade it\*.”

It is undoubtedly a very just complaint that is made against those who either hurry over the service, or curtail it in the common course of reading; and people who are desirous to keep up the solemnity of worship deserve, not our pardon only, but our praise, for endeavouring to have it redressed: but will shortening the service be sure to have that effect? I cannot think it will. I take the case to be pretty near the same with him who hurries over or curtails the service in his reading, as it is with him who gives little or no attention to the hearing of it. The same indisposition of mind to pray, which hinders the congregation from attending to the prayers when they are read, may hinder the minister too from reading them with the decency with which they ought to be read: but we know what remedy is most proper to prescribe in that case; a remedy which will never fail, whatever the length of the service be.

And let me exhort you, my brethren, and myself, to take off as much as lies in every

\* Chap. II. Page 23.

one of us the weight of this objection; let us go always into the house of God with the dispositions which are required in those who minister there; and we shall never come from thence reproaching ourselves, very seldom under the reproach of other men.

“ Under this head the case of aged and  
“ infirm ministers upon poor benefices comes  
“ to be considered.” — It is said, “ That there  
“ are many who are neither able to main-  
“ tain an assistant, nor yet to go through  
“ the whole duty without. That they may  
“ have more than one church to supply, a  
“ second, a third, and perhaps a fourth.  
“ That the case of such ministers is most de-  
“ plorable, and that some allowance ought  
“ to be made in favour of such at least.  
“ That reducing the public service would  
“ give some relief. And till this is done, it  
“ is not to be expected that it will every  
“ where, and by all clergymen, be performed  
“ as it ought\*.”

I have great compassion for those venerable veterans, whose stipends bear no proportion to their services, and who are worn out in the attendance on the altar, though

\* Chap II. Page 23.



scarce able to live by the altar; but some compassion is likewise due to the souls of the congregations which are committed to their care. Now adding to their salary will effectually answer both these ends; while a reduction of the liturgy may, I fear, have a tendency to defeat the more important end of the two. I am sure, the congregations will reap more advantage, and the ease of the pastor be better consulted, by augmenting the number of ministers, than by diminishing the number of prayers.

An old or infirm minister, you say, has three or four churches to serve, the days are short and cold, the service long, the distance between the places of worship obliges him to hurry without breath from one to the other, and to mutter the service as a charm, rather than pronounce it as an act of devotion. The case is hard, I confess; but let us see what men would chuse to do in a similar case in any other profession.

A lawyer, for instance, has more opinions to give than will allow him sufficient time to attend fully to each. Would his clients wish that he should dwell less upon their cases, or would they not chuse to retain

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another

another lawyer? A physician again has so many visits to make, that he is hurried away to one house before he has well set his foot in the other. It would answer the doctor's convenience very well to make his visit as short as possible; but his patients, I presume, would think it preferable to call in another physician.

But the stipend is too scanty to allow an assistant. This I own and lament! It is an evil, however, that is daily decreasing; and I hope by public and private bounty the small benefices may, in time, be so far augmented in every part of the kingdom, that this complaint will be in a great measure, if not entirely, removed.

The repetitions in our liturgy come next to be considered. “Whether it be indeed  
“agreeable to right reason, to the main end  
“and design of our religion, or to the rule  
“and observation of its blessed Author, to  
“continue them in his church\*.” And an instance is produced in the Lord's prayer; upon which these gentlemen generously declare, “that they will make no severe remarks, as some have done†; only desir-

\* Page 25.

† Page 26.



“ing that common reason and moderation  
“may be deemed sufficient ; and that we do  
“not overcharge our worship with the very  
“best of formularies.” And in a separate dis-  
course on this head, they declare, “that  
“they can discover no better reason for this  
“practice, than the church’s injunctions ;  
“to which they profess themselves willing  
“to pay all dutiful obedience in all cases,  
“only taking care to do nothing that is  
“sinful in any\*.”

The first thing then requisite to ease this  
scruple in those who are troubled with it is,  
to convince them that the repetition of the  
Lord’s prayer, as it is made in our liturgy,  
is not a sinful practice.

It is observed, say the objectors, concern-  
ing the Lord’s prayer in particular, “that  
“it is enjoined to be publickly used every  
“Lord’s day, in our ordinary service, when  
“there is no communion, no less than five  
“times in the morning†.” That is, ab-  
stracting the sermon for the reason which I  
shall give hereafter, four times. Now, if  
this be sinful, what shall we say for the  
church of God, which from age to age, in

\* Page 28.

† Page 25.

uninterrupted, and, as far as I have ever heard, uncontroverted, practice has repeated, in the cviith Psalm, the very same number of times, in a space which bears no proportion to the length of our service, this earnest and pious wish, "O! that men would therefore  
" praise the Lord for his goodness, and de-  
" clare the wonders that he doth for the chil-  
" dren of men!" This is one of those repetitions that I have hitherto been weak enough to consider as adding to the beauty as well as to the length of this psalm, and consequently of our service!

But this is not the worst. Allow me, my brethren, to lament the storm, which upon the same foot of argument, I foresee hanging upon the head of the cxxxvith psalm; the author of which, not content with a fourth, or with a thirteenth\* repetition, has ventured, in contempt of this reasoning, in the compass of 27 verses, to send up to the throne of God, and to publish to the ends of the earth, more than twice thirteen times his acknowledgement, "That the mercy of  
" the Lord endureth for ever."

\* Vide Page 26.

And



And may we not give a sanction to our conduct in this respect from the example of our blessed Lord, who, in that very night in which he was betrayed, in the most earnest address that was ever made to God, and on the most pressing exigence that ever happened to man, after having put up this short but emphatical prayer, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done," knew no better way of enforcing his petition than by repeating it? For we read, that again he went away and prayed, and said the same words.

From these short hints it appears to be far from being so certain as these authors seem to suppose it, "That repetitions are sinful; that it is disagreeable to right reason, to the main end and design of our religion, to the rule, or observation, or practice of its blessed Author, to continue them in our church."

Particularly, to put the repetition of the Lord's prayer on a foot with the repetitions which those who take the liberty to divide from our establishment are apt to make

(when, as it is generally said, they inadvertently make any\*) is stamping a higher value upon their performances than I ever yet heard them rated at: but, when I am convinced that the repetition of their prayers need not be objected to more than the repetition of our blessed Lord's, I will be of the first to leave my own church, to attend theirs, even though it be at the Foundery or the Tabernacle.

We are farther told †, that these judicious persons object to us the too frequent repetitions of the divine attributes at the beginning, and of our blessed Lord's merits at the conclusion, of such short prayers as we use.

With respect to this, and repetitions in general, thus much at least may be fairly said, that all public devotion being calculated (as far as it possibly can be) for general use; and as every prayer is supposed to contain matter of instruction as well as of devotion, it is not easy to discern the propriety of condemning what God himself has enjoined us to perform, as the most useful method of public admonition, "to lay precept upon precept, and line upon line." I cannot

\* Page 31.

† Ib.

think



think that the adorable attributes of God can be too frequently in our lips; or the inexpressible merits of a suffering Saviour too deeply impressed upon our minds——

And let those who compliment themselves with the opinion of an understanding superior to the multitude, shew it in that which seems to be the best use and proof of it, a proper and humble compliance with the infirmities of their weaker brethren. For such is the will of our Father, “that not one of these little ones should perish!”

So far I cannot but agree with what is proposed \* by these gentlemen, that every thing which has not an immediate connexion with the worship of God, as Banns, Briefs, Citations, with other equally elegant and instructive performances, might have some more proper time and place assigned it. And, after all, if it should be generally thought expedient or necessary to shorten the service, those who are of that opinion shall have my free concurrence, provided they begin with that which seems to me to be most liable to just exception, and most easily perverted to the ends of human interest, passion, and

\* Page 24.

caprice; to speak freely, but yet candidly, I mean the sermon.

This I will most willingly remit, for their ease, to my congregation whenever I have authority to do so. Though I attend to it myself sometimes with profit, often with pleasure, with patience always when it is my turn to hear.

We come to the Athanasian creed: the querists declare “their unfeigned assent to  
“that creed upon the whole \*, and desire  
“nothing derogatory to it, unless it be this,  
“that it may be omitted †;” and the chief reason which they give for this is, “that it  
“is not so plain as to be of general use, and  
“has been the occasion of much unchristian  
“altercation ‡.”

I cannot think this by any means a sufficient reason for omitting this creed; because, if we are to omit reading in public whatever is not sufficiently clear to the apprehension of the multitude, or whatever has been the occasion of much unchristian contention, I fear we shall omit many things which all Christian churches have agreed to retain. What think you of some parts of St. Paul's

\* Page 93.

† Page 97.

‡ Page 94.

epistles,



epistles, in which are many things, upon the authority of another apostle, “hard to be understood, and which the unlearned and unstable wrest to their own destruction”. Are we to omit the reading them, because every one may not understand them? But the queries here proposed will press equally hard upon St. Paul’s epistles, and other scriptures, as they do upon the Athanasian creed. Let us only repeat their question\*, and ask, “Are the epistles we have mentioned (which have been the occasion of so much unchristian altercation in every part of Christendom) of such great benefit and importance to be read in churches as some contend? are they so plain and intelligible as to be truly useful and edifying to a congregation! for that we suppose is one great end of reading them in public. And yet how few are there, in comparison, who have any notion of what they are reading. And if they have little or none about it, as is plainly, but unhappily, the case of the bulk of our congregations, is the intent of their reading them answered?”

\* Page 94.

Let

Let us ask again, in their words\*, “Can  
 “it be necessary, or indeed congruous, that  
 “any thing should be read as a matter of  
 “public instruction, which is so much above  
 “the capacities of those who read it? How  
 “then shall he that occupieth the room of  
 “the unlearned say Amen to what he heareth  
 “or readeth, seeing he understandeth not  
 “what is uttered by himself or others?”

If these questions may be asked with as much propriety, and as much force, of St. Paul’s epistles as of the Athanasian creed, they will conclude equally for the omission of both, or of neither.

Before I come to the collects, give me leave to ask one question with regard to a stricture which I am at a loss to understand. It is said, “that all our prayers plainly shew  
 “that they are offered up to God in the  
 “name of the Mediator; yet not including  
 “the Lord’s prayer, and that of St. Chrysostom †.” If by this be meant, that these prayers are not offered up in the name of Christ; it appears to me to be evidently otherwise. If it mean no more than that by no mention of Christ being made in them,

\* Page 95.

† Page 37.



it is not so obvious to all that they are made in his name, as it is that those are which expressly make mention of it, it is extremely trivial. As upon the second of these suppositions this remark deserves no answer, I will treat it upon the foot of the first. Nothing can be plainer than that the prayer dictated by our blessed Lord is put up upon the bare strength of his authority, which is most properly in his name; and the other appears to me to be a direct address to Christ himself; for it is he alone who declares, that if two shall agree on earth, as touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my Father who is in heaven; and the reason follows; "For where two or three  
"are gathered together in my name, there  
"am I in the midst of them." Now the prayer of St. Chrysostom is expressly addressed to Him who has promised, that when two or three are gathered together in his name he will hear their requests; that is, Christ. How then it comes to pass that this prayer is not included amongst those that plainly shew they are offered up in the name of Christ, I cannot see.

I come

I come to the collects \*. It is asked, "As  
 " to the matter, is it always adapted to that  
 " of the epistle and gospel, of which they  
 " are said to be the collected substance?" I  
 answer, in general, it is; and if, in some  
 cases, it falls out otherwise, where is the  
 crime, upon supposition that the petition be  
 such as it ought to be?

It is demanded again, "As to the place  
 " where they are brought in, do we not  
 " sometimes, if not very often, find that  
 " they are brought in very incongruously,  
 " and out of proper order and season?"

As the collect for the tenth Sunday after  
 Trinity is selected as a sample out of many  
 that are said to occur; I will give you their  
 objection, and what I think a sufficient  
 answer.

"In this collect, say they, we beg Al-  
 " mighty God to attend to our prayers, and,  
 " that we may obtain our petitions, that he  
 " would make us to ask such things as shall  
 " please him. Would not any one here  
 " think we were beginning our prayers? But  
 " instead of this our introductory collect  
 " proves, in some sort, a concluding one."

\* Page 111.



The objection, if it can be called one, will lay as strongly against one part of the Lord's prayer, as against this collect. The petition in the collect is the same with that in the Lord's prayer, "Thy will be done." Now put the question. Would not any one think here that we were just beginning our prayers, but our introductory petition is thrown forward into the middle of the prayer; and our blessed Lord in his agony was pleased to make it a concluding one!

Again, \* we are called upon to answer, "When on some vigils or eves of festivals we are directed to read the collect for the ensuing day, and therein (though it may be night) to call it the day then present (this day), giving it the same title the day following also, is this agreeable to our common notions of day and night, and to our common way of speaking about either in like cases?"

We are told, "that the learned Mr. Johnson has made a distinction here agreeable enough to his great learning; but the misfortune is, that learning and common sense are two different things. But, how-

\* Page 113.

"ever,

“ever, that this is the true and the only defence that can be made of our church in this particular.”

It is plain, that these gentlemen did not think this the true, and I do not think it the only defence that can be made of our church in this particular; and therefore as a Christian, and not a Jew (as is afterwards said\*), I will propose such a defence of this practice, as I think a Christian may acquiesce in. Nay, I will shew that every Christian does or ought to do the very thing that is condemned in this observation once at least in every twenty-four hours. I take it for granted, that every Christian joins the Lord's prayer to the last address he makes to heaven before he composes himself to rest, which is not only generally at night, but sometimes, perhaps, pretty late at night; and yet he makes no scruple to beg of God to give him this day his daily bread, though this petition must be supposed to extend so far into the day following, as till he can have an opportunity of repeating it again.

And though it be said on one side †, “that all the learning in the world will not

\* Page 113.

† Page 112.

“easy



“ easily persuade our common people that  
“ to-day is not to-day, and to-morrow to-  
“ morrow;” yet it may as truly be said on  
the other, that the word “ day” is made use  
of in common speech without any regard to  
that distinction of the parts of it which  
arises from light and darkness; as when we  
speak of all the days of a man’s life, or of  
any thing continuing to be observed to this  
day.

Now as the authors of these objections pro-  
fess they “ reckon it no shame\*,” I must as  
freely own I esteem it no honour to them,  
not to have more particularly observed, even  
in matters of this minute kind, upon how  
slender a thread their exceptions hang. And  
I heartily wish with them †, “ that every  
“ thing little and insignificant, and tending  
“ more to minister questions than Christian  
“ edifying, were fairly dismissed and allow-  
“ ed no more place in the great business of  
“ religion;” and that they, as they well  
advise other Christians, would “ discern  
“ more and better wherein the true spirit  
“ and essence of it consists.” Which, I fear,  
has been as little distinguished in the three

\* Page 113.

† Ib.

next exceptions, "The beginning of this  
"day," "Lighten our darkness," and "who  
"alone werkest great marvels," as in the last.

But the time admonishes me to conclude;  
after I have observed in few words how our  
liturgy is calculated to exhort those who are  
trained up in the communion of our church.  
This is one consequence which follows from  
holding fast the faithful word, and one de-  
sign of our present meeting.

A child educated in the use of our liturgy  
cannot be ignorant of any essential doctrine  
of Christianity; of any article that is ne-  
cessary to salvation. The hymns, the  
psalms, the lessons, which make up the  
body of our service, are the word of God;  
and what remains is professedly built upon  
that word, and in general clearly deducible  
from it. The blessed hope of our Lord's  
appearance to complete the mystery of our  
redemption and reconciliation to God, with  
the necessity of repentance and a sincere en-  
deavour after holiness, are inculcated through  
the whole. The preaching of Christ and  
his apostles, which brought the world out  
of darkness into light, are the subjects of our  
daily instruction. Every time our service



is performed, is that glorious prophecy literally fulfilled, "They shall be all taught  
" of God."

And if this treasure be contained in an earthen vessel (for every human institution will be such), we shall have less regard to the outside, if we set a proper value upon that which is contained within.

The business of Christianity is not criticism, but conversion. Let us be in earnest about the truths which concern our salvation, about words less solicitous. The only advantage a Christian should allow himself to make of errors in that kind, upon subjects of the last consequence, is to have the merit of overlooking them.

It is usual on this occasion to make a collection for the children educated in this school. I hope no one will dissent from this. Charity is of no sect. In this let us venture to imitate the example of our heavenly Father; who is no respecter of persons, but whoever, of whatever denomination, feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.

To him, in the characters under which he has vouchsafed to reveal himself to us,

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the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier of mankind, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be glory ! Amen.

SERMON



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S E R M O N V.

*The Despisers of Christ's glorious  
Kingdom Objects of Divine Wrath.*

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2 PET. ii. 9, 10.

*The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly  
out of temptations; and to reserve the un-  
just to the day of judgement to be punished—  
But chiefly them who walk after the  
flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, and despise  
government; presumptuous, self-willed,  
they are not afraid to speak evil of dig-  
nities.*

**W**E are called upon, by authority, to  
humble ourselves before Almighty  
God: we have now, in consequence of that  
appointment, sent up our prayers and suppli-  
cations to the Divine Majesty, in the most  
devout and solemn manner, to avert all  
those judgements which we have most justly  
deserved—to continue his mercies—to per-

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petuate

petuate the enjoyment of the Protestant religion amongst us, the safety and prosperity of these kingdoms and dominions—and have implored his protection and blessing upon our fleets and armies.

Acknowledging the great mercy of the Almighty, who has not only been our defence in other times of danger, but hath protected us from imminent destruction at this time especially, when some neighbouring countries in alliance and friendship with us have been visited by a dreadful and most extensive earthquake—which has also in some degree, and the effects of it in a great degree, been felt in several parts of these kingdoms and dominions.

And this, I hope, we have done (as we are particularly directed) in the deepest sense of our own impieties, which have most justly deserved heavy and severe punishments from the hand of Heaven, and of the great miseries which the inhabitants of these kingdoms must inevitably have suffered if a like visitation had been shewn forth upon them—and to shew that we place our whole trust and confidence in the mercy of Almighty God, as well to deliver us from so heavy a calamity,



calamity, as also to direct and support us in the present situation of our public affairs, which, as to the issue of them, are of the highest importance to the peace and safety of these kingdoms—to our commerce and liberties—and, above all, to the most valuable blessing of the Protestant religion.

On this account, I have chosen the words I first read, as they contain some reflections which may deserve our attention upon the present occasion.

They are not a complete sentence of themselves, but oblige us to look back a little farther for the completion of the sense.

The reasoning which introduces them is this:

“ If God spared not the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgement ;

And spared not the old world, but reserved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly—

And, turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with

an overthrow, making them an ensample to them that after should live ungodly—

And delivered just Lot vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling amongst them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds)—

If all these things be so, as we know they are, then it is clear that the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust to a day of judgement to be punished.”

Here we have an induction of particulars upon which the general assertion in the text is grounded.

To shew, beyond all controversy, that the Lord does know, or has determined to deliver the godly out of trials, and to reserve the unjust to a day of judgement to be punished, he instances in three well-attested acts of the Lord's immediate interposition to vindicate his own sovereignty, by the deliverance of those who acknowledged it from the visible destruction of those who set up their own will in opposition to it.



The detrusion of all those angels, but of those only, who sinned from their original state of honour and happiness—

The destruction of the whole world of the ungodly by the deluge, with the reservation of eight persons only, the whole remains of those who had kept up a sense of religion amongst them—

And the total overthrow of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire, turning the whole into ashes, with the exception again of one only family, who had not suffered themselves to be infected with their execrable practice—

These are instances, sufficient in their number to prove what they were produced by the apostle to prove: that the Lord knows, or has decreed, at times and in ways foreseen only by himself, to bring sudden destruction on those who obstinately refuse to obey his commands, without involving in that destruction those who do.—  
In particular cases, where the ordinary course of his Providence has not provided corrections proportionate to men's crimes, to visit the guilty with immediate and exemplary inflictions of his displeasure, reserv-

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ing the innocent only as peculiar monuments of his regard.

But though every kind of sin is displeasing to God, and sure not to leave its punishment far behind, yet the apostle particularizes a character which is very singularly offensive to him, and more likely than any other to bring down his immediate judgement upon those who come within its description—but chiefly “those who walk after the flesh, in  
“the lusts of uncleanness, and despise govern-  
“ment—presumptuous, self-willed—they  
“are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.”

Now as it is our duty, and ought to be our concern, to lay aside every weight which may retard our progress in the favour of God; so our highest interest is at stake, and our most vigorous endeavour should be exerted, to clear ourselves of that chiefly, whatever it be, which we know to be most the object of his aversion, and most obnoxious to his instant vengeance.

We have heard what account the apostle gives of this—and one part of his charge is so plain that it needs no comment. It speaks for itself. The best reproof for that conduct amongst Christians is, not to name it.

But



But the other part does not seem to carry so much conviction in it——“ who despise  
“ government, and are not afraid to speak  
“ evil of dignities !”

Does it not sound as if it were said that a turbulent and clamorous spirit is the principal mark at which the arrows of the Almighty are prepared to fly? Is faction, then, and sedition, a crime of so black a complexion, as to stand foremost in the catalogue of those which call forth the avenging hand of God? It is said, indeed, that “ rebellion is as the  
“ sin of witchcraft”—but that, we know, was rebellion against God.

I have no desire to be an advocate for sedition: but there seems to be less need to call in the Divine aid to avenge it, because it does often (in absolute governments especially) meet with the fate it deserves from the hands of men.

And, indeed, this interpretation agrees but ill with the explication given of the place a little below, where the persons here described are said to “ speak evil of the things  
“ that they were ignorant of.”

But it cannot be supposed that any man, much less that any sect or number of men  
(let

106 *Despisers of Christ's glorious Kingdom*

(let their wickedness be as great as it can be), could be ignorant of the nature and sanctions of civil power.—These are amongst the first things that bad men become acquainted with, if it be but barely in order to evade the force of them.

Their crime was of a deeper dye! And as it is of the last consequence for us to know clearly what that disposition is, which the apostle has declared to be most displeasing to God, and to call most loudly for his inflicting present punishment on all those who are hardy enough to persist in it, I hope it will not be useless, as it seems to me to be necessary, to lay this part of the text more open than it now appears to be.

The word then, which is here translated "government," is generally, in the New Testament, applied to "celestial power;" as Ephesians i. 21. where Christ is said to be "exalted far above all dominion"—and "dominions" are mentioned, Colossians i. 16. amongst the invisible things of the creation. Indeed it is a derivative of that very title which is given, by way of eminence, to Christ Jesus when we stile him "Lord"—and  
may



may with great propriety be translated, "the  
"lordship or supreme government of Christ."

And this corresponds entirely with the description of these men both here and in St. Jude (who wrote upon the same occasion and near the same time, and whose epistle is on that account the best comment upon St. Peter's); who are said by one apostle to deny the Lord who bought them; and by the other to deny the only potentate Jesus Christ, our Lord and God; that is, they absolutely rejected the extraordinary, if not the ordinary, providence of God, and his government of the natural and moral world by Jesus Christ.

They ridiculed the prophecies concerning Christ's second coming, either in vengeance to complete the desolation of the Jews, or in glory to reward the fidelity of his distressed disciples; and were so far from having any expectation of his promises, that they laughed at all who had:—saying, "Where is the  
"promise of his coming!" And the reason of their insult was such as could only be given by a profest fatalist or an absolute unbeliever. "For, since the fathers fell asleep,"  
say

say they, "all things continue as they were  
"from the beginning of the creation."

And that "government" is here particularly ascribed by the apostle, and by them denied to Christ, will appear more strongly, only by giving the word which is translated "dignities" its obvious and literal sense—"and speak evil of, or blaspheme, the glories"—and this we are warranted to do from a like use of the same term in St. Peter's first epistle, where, speaking of the declarations of the prophets concerning the Christian dispensation, he tells us, "that they had given  
"previous testimony to the sufferings of  
"Christ, and the glories which were to be  
"consequent upon them."

Here it is properly translated, and does undoubtedly refer to the different states in glory which St. Paul gives us reason to expect at the resurrection of the dead—"There  
"is one glory of the sun, another glory of  
"the moon, and another glory of the stars;  
"for one star differeth from another star in  
"glory. So also is the resurrection of the  
"dead." The word being plural is highly expressive of the different orders and degrees of glory with which our blessed Lord will,

at



at his last appearance, reward his faithful followers.

The translation, then, of this part of the text, instead of “who despise government, “and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities,” will be perhaps better read thus, “who hold in contempt the lordship, or supreme dominion, of Christ, presumptuous, “pleasers of themselves, and blaspheme “without horror the glorious privileges of “his future kingdom.”

And this is confirmed by a passage from his first epistle——“Rejoice that you are made “partakers of the sufferings of Christ—that “when his glory shall appear ye may be “glad with exceeding joy——If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy “are you, for the spirit of glory and of God “(or of the divine glory) resteth on you— “which (glory) is blasphemed (the very expression which is here translated speaking “evil of dignities) by them; but by you “esteemed as it ought to be!”

The crime, then, from the prevalence of which there is most reason to apprehend the sudden stroke of Divine vengeance, appears to be (from the apostle’s account of it) a contempt

tempt of the sovereignty of Christ; and blasphemy against the glorious rewards which he has promised!

This is, indeed, a crying sin — it calls aloud for vengeance! It is defying the only power we have reason to fear, and rejecting the only help on which we can securely rely! It is the highest indignity that can be offered to the Majesty of Heaven, and includes in it every lesser breach of his law! It is doing despite to the spirit of grace, and giving the lie to the testimony which God has given of his Son!

It is the very blasphemy which had this indelible mark fixed upon it by the word of truth, "that it should never be forgiven in this world, or in that which is to come." It seems to be threatened with temporary as well as with eternal vengeance, by Him who "is to be feared when he is angry," and whose indignation, once provoked, nothing but repentance can disarm. For so it is written, "What shall the Lord, when he comes, do to those husbandmen?—He shall miserably destroy those wicked men, and give the vineyard to others!" And again—"When the king heard this, he

" was



“ was incensed, and sent forth his armies to  
“ destroy those murderers, and to consume  
“ their city with fire!”

And the event gave too fatal a confirmation  
of the knowledge and power of Him who  
foretold it.

That city was the capital of Judea—once  
the holy city—here he loved to dwell—  
he had a delight therein—but she forfeited  
his protection with her own allegiance, and  
became the first fruits of his displeasure!—Ill-  
fated city! whose being lifted up so high  
served at last only to add more weight to her  
fall! whose crime was so black, that her  
Saviour could not prevent her punishment!  
whose sentence so heavy, that her Judge  
could not pronounce it, even in the distant  
prospect, without a tear!

When he beheld the city, he wept over it,  
and said, “ If thou hadst regarded in this thy  
“ day the things that belonged to thy peace  
“ —but now they are hid from thine eyes!”  
The prophecy is well known, and the literal  
completion of it. The very stone which  
that proud city rejected, the rock from  
whence she was hewn, “ fell upon her, and  
“ dashed her in pieces!”

Come,

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Come, ye that disbelieve, and behold (in this as in the former instances) what desolations he hath wrought in the earth—be still, and know from hence that he is God!—He will be exalted among the nations—he will be exalted in the earth!

Yet even in this judgement (the extremity of which exceeds expression, conception, and almost belief) he remembered mercy! At the same time that he reserved the unbelieving and unjust to *this* day of judgement to be punished, he knew how to deliver the godly from the fiery trial!

While those who rejected his counsels, and would none of his reproof, “perished in their contradiction;” the despised body of those who trusted in his word, being admonished by his prophets (as the historian of the time inform us) to leave the devoted city, were (in recompence of their fidelity) exempt from the general ruin.

Such was the fate of Jerusalem!—We have heard her crime! we have seen her punishment! there is no need to go back to the shipwreck of the old world; to the subversion of that detestable city, whose name, as well as suffering, is set forth for a lesson to those



We have as plain and full prophecies as they had, that we shall in like manner  
I perish,

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perish, except we recollect ourselves. And so much stronger than they had, as their destruction is an additional and a visible argument to us, of the certainty of what is foretold concerning our own!

We may as well doubt of the existence and power of God, as of the completion of prophecies which have been given under his direction.

The great contest between God and man from the beginning has been, whether his will or theirs were to take place—whether we should please ourselves or him. And

One grand difference between the dispensation of natural and of the Christian religion is this—that in the former God is supposed to reserve the power in his own hands, in the latter he has expressly delegated it to his Son.

Wherever the power be lodged, it makes little difference. The object to whom we are to address ourselves for support is varied by his express appointment, but the necessity of obedience remains the same.

And we have the very same reason now for trust in Christ, that the antient people of God had for depending upon God himself.

To



To him is ascribed the creation of the universe! And he, who made this earth and the inhabitants of it, cannot be ignorant in what manner to display his sovereign authority over them all. If we have any fear therefore from our own constitution! he knows whereof we are made. If we are alarmed at the unsettled state of the globe! his hands have fashioned it, and he understands every tendency of it long before!

To him is all power given in heaven and earth. He cannot therefore but know in what manner to exert that power, to the confusion of sinners, and for the protection of his saints.

In confirmation of this, the very winds and seas did obey him while he was here in his lowest state. He could enable the meanest of his followers to say to the firmest rock, "Be thou moved and cast into the midst of the sea," and it should obey—and he can and will (when the ends of his dispensation require) make those very elements, which are the instruments of commercial strength, conspire against us—and this earth, on which we place our utmost security, tremble under our feet; and we ourselves, while we are

I 2

dreaming

dreaming of extending our property upon the surface, may go down quick into the bowels of it!

Over every element he has fully demonstrated his power—Air, water, fire, have, in their turns, been the instruments of his vengeance.

He hath made spirits, or the air, his messenger; and his minister, a flaming fire! He hath told before (at almost the distance of 2000 years) of violent convulsions in the earth which should precede his final visitation, and has he not lately fulfilled his word!

Who does not even now shudder on recollecting the desolation of Lisbon? And, if it be so dreadful in the relation, what must it have been if we had beheld the various circumstances of distress which passed unobserved, and lay buried in the common ruin! to have been involved in those horrors which they who felt are not able to describe!

“ Who may stand in thy sight, O Lord!  
 “ when thou art angry! The waters saw  
 “ thee, and were afraid! The depths also were  
 “ troubled. Thou art the God that doest  
 “ wonders, thou has declared thy strength  
 “ among



“among the people! Thine arrows went  
“abroad! The earth trembled and shook  
“withall! Thy way is in the sea, and thy  
“path in the great waters, and thy footsteps  
“not known!”

This however heavy affliction to that unhappy people is a merciful admonition to the nations round them. Would to God we might be wise at others calamities which are past, rather than by our own which may be yet in store! Who knows but even now the Judge may stand at his door! How little did they think of their calamity, till they were overtaken by it, till their astonishment rendered them almost incapable of thinking of it! “Their fear came upon them as a  
“whirlwind, and their desolation as an  
“armed man!” suddenly and irresistibly! A standing warning for every one of us to be prepared at all times to meet what may happen to any of us at any time. Our security is only in our obedience! and our protection from the Lord our God!

Let us not give ourselves to censure the lives of other men, but to reform our own. Let us pass no angry or ill-digested judgement upon the manner in which they have

been visited, but prepare ourselves to meet every visitation of the Creator, of the Ruler, of the Judge of the world!

His judgements are like the great deep! No human reason can fathom them! When we attempt it, we go out of our element and beyond our line!

We ought not, therefore, to add an insult to their misfortune, by representing them as stricken of God, and smitten for the enormity of their crime.

The text, and the examples which are produced in proof of it, will inform us better. We see in the declaration of the apostle, and in every instance by which I have enforced it—that when the Lord decreed to bring vengeance on those who had forfeited his protection by their guilt, he never failed to shew mercy to them who had not forgot his authority, nor forsaken his commands! He destroyed those *only* who had sinned, and *all* those who had sinned.—Witness *all* the angels who fell! the *whole* world of ungodly that were destroyed at the deluge, and the *whole* number of guilty in the opprobrious cities! with *all* those who despised his sovereignty at the  
desolation



desolation of Jerusalem. And the preservation of *all* who had no part in the transgression in every place!

But how will this agree with what we know of the fate of this unfortunate city? —where the worst of those that perished could hardly be so bad as some of those who survived; who were (as we are told) so totally void of the two great principles of love to God and man, that they plundered one in defiance of the other, and, with the very spirit of him who was a murderer from the beginning, persecuted those whom God had wounded, and rejoiced in spreading the flame which humanity would have endeavoured to extinguish with its very tears!

This therefore is in this respect totally different from every instance in which we have seen that God has been pleased to interpose *judicially* to support the authority of his laws!

And so I conceive, by what we experience, that in all such cases it must be! For the very notion of a judgement seems to me to be “an extraordinary interposition of God  
“to make that exact distinction between  
“good and bad men, which cannot be made

“ according to the ordinary course of his general laws.”—It is an anticipation, in some measure, of the great account; and in this light I conceive it to be said, that Sodom and Gomorrah, by the judgement which was inflicted upon them, were set forth as a demonstration of the fire eternal; not only as they were destroyed by fire, but as the method of executing justice upon those cities was exactly conformable to the rule by which God has declared he will inflict eternal punishment.—It was an evident and entire discrimination between the worshippers of God, and those who acknowledged him not.

And will any man allow himself to say, “ that no one good man suffered ?” We are very well assured that many bad ones escaped in this lamentable event.

The only inference we can fairly make from it is, that which will answer all the purposes of religion and duty, “ That the earth “ is the Lord's and all that is therein; for “ he hath founded it upon the seas, and prepared it upon the floods !”

We should take care not to confound that general dispensation of his Providence, in which “ all things come alike to all,” with that



that equal measure of it by which “he  
“gathers the wheat into his garner, but  
“burns the chaff with inextinguishable  
“fire.” Otherwise we may happen to lose  
our own charity in determining of his  
justice.—For “his thoughts are not as  
“our thoughts!” Happy it is for us that  
they are not! what a scene of things should  
we have, if God were pleased to ratify the  
sentences men rashly pass upon each other!

Let us leave God’s government to him-  
self; trust him with the conduct of his own  
Providence;—look up to the rod, and him  
who has appointed it!

If we are thankful that we are not con-  
sumed, let us shew it by obedience!

If we desire protection to our fleets and  
armies, let us acknowledge the sovereignty  
of that Lord of battles, who ruleth over the  
kingdoms of the earth!

If we have a real value for that most va-  
luable, but I fear least-thought-of blessing,  
the Protestant religion,—let us not only  
protest against a few speculative errors of  
another church, but reform the practical  
failings of our own!

If

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If we have a due sense of the universal "dominion of our Lord," we shall learn from *his word* how to cultivate every virtue which will be the ornament and support of our country; and to shake off every vice, the practice of which, as far as it can naturally operate, must tend to its destruction!

Above all, let us not think that *one serious day* can do our work! As our danger is perpetual, so let our care be too! I leave to others to declaim against the sins of this land.—I recommend to every one of us to take off as much as he can from the common stock.—Every man's business must lay within himself.—Let us judge ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord. Then shall we have nothing to fear, though the earth be moved, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea!

But if, on the contrary, we are bold enough to set up our *own will* in opposition to *his*, we shall do well to consider whether we are stronger than he! that we should provoke the Lord to anger.

We will suppose ourselves to be entirely free from the apprehension of these shocks in the earth.—Alas! is that all we have to  
appre-



apprehend! are these the only instruments in the hand of God!

When we look into the constitution of ourselves, how contracted is the knowledge of the ablest physician! When we dive into the constitution of the earth, how doubtful is the determination of the most accurate philosopher!

Upon whom then will you depend, but upon Him who *made* you both!

I will suppose that these signs did not forebode the dissolution of all things; and that this earth should continue as it has done from the beginning beyond the time that we shall have any concern upon it. This is all that the most determined advocate for natural, for second causes, can pretend! What will he or you gain by that! This only, that you shall be dead before! and then you are sure you cannot escape, if you do till then, the decisive judgement of God!

Remember too, that as surely as the Lord created this earth, so surely he will destroy it; that “his day will come as a thief  
“in the night; in which the heavens shall  
“pass away with a great noise, and the  
“elements shall melt with fervent heat;  
“the

“the earth also and the works that are  
“therein shall be burnt up.”

Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing that ye  
“know these things before,” beware lest ye  
also, being led away by the error of the  
wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.  
—But grow in grace and in “the knowledge  
“of our Lord Jesus Christ.”—To Him be  
glory for ever! Amen.

SERMON



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S E R M O N VI.

*A formal and an acceptable Fast  
described and distinguished.*

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PSALM lxxviii. 34, 35, 36, 37.

34. *When he slew them, then they sought him; and they returned and enquired early after God:*
35. *And they remembered that God was their Rock, and that the High God was their Redeemer;*
36. *Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues;*
37. *For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.*

IT is hardly possible to entertain a more unfavourable notion of the heart of man, than that which is conveyed to us in this representation of the conduct of the Jews, as it is transmitted down to our times in the most

most undoubted records of their own nation. They were under the immediate government of God: they had had very signal and frequently repeated instances of his protection. His promises to them were exceeding great; and his performance, from time to time, sufficient to keep alive in them the firmest reliance upon the entire completion of those promises. His injunctions, it must be confessed, were calculated to *try* their fidelity; but the power he had so often shewn, and which he had given assurances that he would still farther exert in their favour, was equally so to *support* it. Yet can one believe it, even upon the credit of their own report, “that every instance of God’s “goodness served only to unhinge their “obedience, and that their neglect of his “worship and his laws kept pace with his “mercy and indulgence to them!”

Insensible however as they were of his mercies, they were not so hardy as to give no attention to his resentment! “When “he slew them, then they sought him!” Though no sense of past loving-kindnesses, no hope of future favours, could induce them to pay an implicit obedience to his will, yet  
the



the apprehension of impending wrath, the dread of judgements ready to be executed upon them, soon roused them from their lethargy; and being then convinced, that no hand was able to deliver them but that which was lifted up against them, they "fought him early," and "enquired after God." This, at least, looked well. Here was something like the beginning of a reformation. This was a proper season to sow the seed of better conduct for the time to come, when, from the sad experience of their former wrong judgement, they were put upon recollecting, "that God was their Rock, and "that the High God was their Redeemer." If in the softer hours of ease and security they had forgot his sovereignty and their own dependence, and were relaxed from their resolutions of obedience, one might have hoped that the cold hand of adversity would have brought them back instantly to a more rigorous sense of their duty, by convincing them of the immediate necessity they were under "to keep his statutes, and observe "his laws."

But however astonishing it may appear, that all the *goodness* of God was too weak to allure

allure them to their duty, it is still more astonishing, if possible, that even his *anger* was not able effectually to deter them from their iniquities. For though “they fought him early, and enquired after God;” yet they “did but flatter him with their mouth, “and lied unto him with their tongue! for “their heart was not whole with him, neither “continued they stedfast in his covenant.”

They were at last only reduced to the recollection of his mercy, by his known determination to punish them for the abuse of it. They knew that they were not able to resist his vengeance, and they were willing to avert it: something therefore was to be done, and to be done instantly. They had “one sure way to save their souls “alive,” by “turning from the wickedness “which they had committed.” But this they thought too great a price to give for their preservation. They thought they could make a better bargain with their Maker; on a condition more easy to themselves. They fought him early; they appointed fasts and prayers, and supplications: they made professions and protestations of duty and allegiance! They enquired after God!

They



They looked back into the long history of all his acts. They sang praise unto him. He wanted their affections, and they gave him "good words." He required obedience, and they "rent their garments!" as if the widest breaches between God and his people could be healed by a song! and as if the favour of the Almighty were to be purchased at the expence of a rag!

This was an easier method than reformation! They preferred it therefore. Instead of suffering their past miscarriages to inspire them with unalterable resolutions of behaving better for the future, they content themselves with *confessing* them! Instead of presenting God with the most acceptable offering of a contrite heart, they "lied unto him" "with their tongues;" as if their hypocrisy could atone for their rebellion!

Incredible perverseness of an infatuated people! inconceivable lenity of an indulgent God! Nothing could equal their madness, but thy mercy! for thou forgavest their misdeeds, and destroyedst them not. But for all this "they sinned yet more," and believed not thy wondrous works—"There-

K

"fore

“fore their days didst thou consume in  
“vanity, and their years in trouble.”

I make no doubt but you are all shocked with this representation. You tremble at the very thought of incurring the Divine displeasure by such repeated provocations. You feel the warmest emotions of gratitude for God's long-suffering and indulgent forbearance to a headstrong and self-will'd generation—a generation which set not their hearts aright, and whose spirit did not cleave stedfastly unto God.

Your hearts bleed inward when you reflect, that a nation so highly favoured by Heaven should so long trifle with his indulgence, and become at last so blinded to all sense of their duty and their interest, as to put it out of the power of infinite Mercy to save them from destruction.

You form a right judgement upon the case; and you cannot encourage that sentiment too much.

But do you seriously think, bad as these men were, and severe as was their punishment, that they were sinners above many other nations, less sensible of his goodness,



more hardened against his threatenings?  
“ I tell you nay—but except we repent, we  
“ shall all likewise perish!” Do not you  
begin to feel that this matter will come  
nearer home than you imagined! are not  
we ourselves that very people that we have  
been condemning, and for whom we could  
but just now scarce reserve one sentiment of  
compassion? Change the names only; and  
what appears so shocking in the Jewish  
history, will be found to be written in as  
deep a dye in the British annals! For let us  
reason together calmly and seriously, on a  
matter of such importance to us, and one so  
nearly related to the occasion on which we  
are met, and let me ask—Which of all those  
blessings, which God so freely indulged to his  
chosen people, has he with-held from us?

When the account is fairly stated, I doubt  
it will appear, that we are as much indebted  
to God for his wonderful deliverances, and  
have made as poor returns for them, as the  
Jews have done! What fruits of holiness have  
we to produce more than they had, which  
his manifold mercies have raised up in us?

Is it not notorious, that no nation, even  
amongst those who knew not God, did ever

abound with more flagrant enormities than this, which is at the same time comforted and condemned by the glorious light of the gospel! And have any, or all his benefits, public or private, ever yet had influence enough upon us to make us set in earnest to correct them! Have they visibly decreased in proportion as he has dispensed his kindness? Rather have not our crimes been multiplied in that proportion, and seemed to vye with the number and the greatness of his blessings! One time indeed, we may recollect, there was an appearance of a serious reformation! But I doubt it was but an appearance: it was founded upon our fears, and it vanished with them. It is now not more than two years since his anger was visibly kindled, and his jealousy burnt like fire against a neighbouring city, when symptoms of the same stroke advanced to our own island, and nobody could insure us from the like calamity: then indeed we sought him early, and enquired after God! But was the concern we then expressed the contrition of a penitent, or the horror of a criminal! it was then only with us, as it had often been before with the people I have selected for  
our



our example, “when he *slew* us” (or, which is the same thing in effect, when we were afraid he *would slay* us) “we *sought* him?”

One day 'tis true there was, when the losses they had actually sustained alarmed many, when the apprehension of what might yet follow awakened more. That day, I well remember, the churches of this metropolis, a thing scarce known on any other occasion, a thing scarce credible but to us who were eye-witnesses of the fact, when the churches, I say, of this great city, these houses of God, devoted to his service and intended to promote it, were as much crowded as the play-house had been the day before, or the gaming-table might be the day that followed!

Then we “sought him early;” we fasted and prayed—we believed and trembled! So favourable a seed-time, one would have hoped, might have produced a better harvest. One would have hoped that we were then in earnest; that the resolutions we then made would have lasted us our lives; that we would have been no longer strangers at the house of Him, from whose terrors we could find no security, though we had been

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too insensible of his love. We consumed away in his displeasure. But no sooner was God pleased to take off his hand, but, like wax melted by the fire, we returned to our former hardness. We recovered our spirits, and were ashamed of our devotion! Our religion, which was but the shadow of our fear, took leave of us when that did. It came and went with it. It had no trace left when that was gone! As the morning cloud, as the early dew, it passed away! and so will all religion which springs up in no better soil, which takes no deeper root! It withereth “before it be plucked up!” Who, that remembers the devotion of that day, could have persuaded himself, at that time, that it would have been so short-lived!—The displeasure of God disappeared too soon for our credit, as well as for our virtue.—Like headstrong children, we took the advantage of the smile of our parent, we watched for the relaxation of his frown, and did not lose that first opportunity to return to our follies! We gave too sudden and too sad a conviction, “That we had but flattered him with our mouth, and dissembled with him in our tongue—for our heart

“was



“was not whole with him, neither continued we steadfast in his covenant.”

Though fear be the least ingenuous ground of religion, yet it has sometimes roused men enough, to make them think of laying a better foundation. And if ours had lasted long enough to do that, it had served to an excellent purpose. If the strong apprehension of God's heavy hand had frightened us into a present sense of duty and resolution of obedience, till a nobler principle could have had time to operate, and considerations of piety had completed what motives merely of immediate safety had begun—we had not now been reduced to a second Fast after that! This nation might have been as prosperous as it had been virtuous; this day might not have been appointed as a day of fasting, but as a day of thanksgiving! And we had been now met, not to deprecate God's wrath, but to adore his mercy! not to implore his blessing, but to acknowledge it.

But what effect could be expected to flow from such an observation of a Fast as we have been recollecting, but that which has visibly followed, the multiplying our transgressions, and the increase of our distress!

Was this the Fast that God hath chosen !  
It was an abomination, even our solemn  
meeting !

Let us now consider before whom we  
stand, and to whom we are presenting our  
supplications ! It is absurd, it is impious, to  
presume that a God of infinite holiness, of  
infinite truth, wisdom, justice, can “ away  
“ with ” a temporary scene of apparent piety,  
but of real hypocrisy ? “ Rent your hearts.”  
Dwell not in the surface of the ordinance !  
but enter into the spirit of it ! Are we weak  
enough to imagine that God will be recon-  
ciled to us for our sins, and be diverted from  
his purposes of taking vengeance on us for  
them, because we “ eat no meat for a day ? ”  
Are we weak enough to suppose that our  
flocking together in crowds, to repeat a parti-  
cular form of prayers, can have any influence  
upon God ! Can we have so little veneration  
for the Deity, to fancy that the annual re-  
petition of the same words, sent forth to  
answer indifferently to every exigence, can  
be acceptable to the ear of Wisdom itself ?  
If we address our prince on occasions that are  
different, our address will differ with the  
occasion. And dare we take more liberty  
2 with



with the King of kings? I would not lessen your deference to authority, but excite your reverence for your Rock and your Redeemer! that no mis-apprehension of any kind may hinder this good work from being as agreeable to Heaven as it can be. My heart burns for the success of this day: that it may begin to wipe off, amongst our other faults, the imperfection of all our former fastings! that it may lay a foundation for our virtue and prosperity, not only for to-day and to-morrow, but for this life, and that which is to come.

We have now a struggle with the Almighty! and we know how, only, he is to be overcome. Remember Jacob! Let him not go till you have obtained his blessing. He will be placable when we are penitent; and we need not be afraid of any evil tidings, while our heart is steadfast, trusting in him. A heart washed in the blood of Jesus is proof against the avenging bolt of Heaven. A soul tempered by the aids of holy Spirit can turn the edge of his glittering sword!

We know what our former Fasts have been! we see what they have done! Continual dissimulation and continued distress!

Shall

Shall we learn from the lesson before us? are we willing to be made wise by the miscarriage of that antient people of God? The cheapest way of buying wisdom, at the expence of another's suffering.

If this be indeed our resolution, I will compare their blessings with ours. I will compare their crimes with ours, and recollect their punishment; that, by seeing what part of it is already come upon us, we may be induced by speedy and steady reformation to prevent the rest.

Their blessings were great. He called their fathers from idolatry, to the knowledge of himself. He brought them out of bondage. He led them through the waters, and destroyed their enemies with the sea. He extirpated the inhabitants of an antient country, and they took the labours of the people in possession. He made them lords of "seven kingdoms" greater and mightier than they. They had laws of his own writing.—By many special acts of Providence, he protected them in every critical turn of their fortunes. He gave them perpetual assurance of his present help, and inspired them silently with the hope of "better things to come." He

had



had not done so with any other nation, neither had the heathen knowledge of his laws!

We think these were extraordinary favours, and so they were! But in what do they exceed those he has done for us? He brought our ancestors likewise from a foreign country: he gave them the possession of "seven kingdoms," so called by our own historians: he gave them the sovereignty of this happy isle, to which Palestine is not to be compared; which Paradise could scarce excell. He gave them early the light of the gospel: clouded indeed at first in the corruptions of the time; unveiled at length by excellent spirits, whom he stirred up at different times, and in different ways, to deliver them from that servile yoke. When their enemies threatened them with vengeance, after their "escape from that bondage," he destroyed them likewise in the sea. He has interposed often, and very visibly, in the support of our religion and our laws; and has made this small spot, which bears no proportion in its extent to many kingdoms of the earth, once renowned for its religion, liberty, laws, arts, arms, and

and commerce, from one sea to the other, and from the flood unto the world's end.

As we come not short in our obligations, I wish I could answer also for our obedience. But this will be a melancholy page. 'Tis a disagreeable task to probe the wounds of my countrymen and brethren. Yet it must be done, in order to heal them! Oh! that I could persuade every one present to perform this unacceptable office of friendship for himself! You best know each of you where your hurts are, and a little honest courage will relieve you. But think not of palliating the matter with yourselves. Skin not over your complaints; to have them break out afterwards with more violence, and with more danger. The transgressions of the Jews have been long no secret: every child has them by rote; they are writ in large characters, and make no small part of the history of your Bible. Nor are some of ours less public, nor less criminal than theirs. Let us see. Were they idolaters? Are not we so too? Who is it amongst us, that has not some other place of resort, more frequented by him, more acceptable to him, than the house of God? Did they forsake him for other gods,



gods, wood and stone? If our idolatry is not so gross, it is as criminal and less excusable than theirs. Every man has his peculiar affection, to which he is more devoted than to his Saviour and his God! Did they sacrifice their sons and their daughters to devils? And do not some amongst us sacrifice the health, the peace, the interest, the very lives of their families, to lust, intemperance, extravagance, and riot! and all that legion of evil spirits, which rank under the standard of your favorite idol, Pleasure! Did they, when they were harnessed, and carrying bows, “turn themselves back in the day of battle?” Have not we more than once done so?

Let us now see by what steps God proceeded with respect to them—that we may take warning by their ill-fortune, and avoid their fate. Upon their first revolts, he dealt with them as a tender parent: he endeavoured to bring them back to duty, by loving corrections and gentle severities. Many a time turned he his wrath away, and would not put forth all his anger. He connived at their failings, and suppressed his resentment. For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind which passeth away, and cometh not again.

again. A consideration which would as well have become the weakness of man, as the mercy of his Maker. Their abuse of his indulgence excited his indignation. He humbled them by various defeats and disgraces; he broke them by long captivity, and prepared them for a total disperſion. He abhorred his inheritance; he brought them down in their wickedneſs; he gave them into the enemy's hand, and they that hated them were lords over them.

Let us not only profit by this example ourſelves, but let us not hide it from the generation to come. Let us ſhew them the praiſes and terrors of the Lord; that they may ſet their hope in him, and not forget the works of the Lord, but keep his commandments. As we ſin againſt greater light, and more numerous bleſſings, let us beware of incurring heavier diſpleaſure, and ſeverer puniſhment.

The effects of God's anger againſt us are too viſibly begun to operate. One of his inſtruments of wrath has been long let looſe upon us, a tedious and expenſive war; and, to make it more ſo, " he goeth not out  
" with our hoſts, nor giveth us victory in  
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“the battle!” He has cast a cloud over the glory of the British flag; he has sullied the lustre of our arms. Shall we look back towards the Mediterranean for a proof of this? or can we comfort ourselves by what we gained on the continent, for what we lost on the ocean? Shall we cast our eye after our fleets and armaments to the Western world? Even there our sun seems to be going down in haste!

One ray of light springs up in the East; but, as if Providence took pleasure in lowering the crest of military pride, to make his own power conspicuous, even this single branch of lawrel is obtained by a hand undisciplined in the art of war!

Why should I mention, but how can I pass over, our last disgrace! He that would know the late exploits of the English armies must seek for them, I fear, where they will make too considerable a figure, in the future “Histories of France.” The person who conducted that expedition was of the first credit in his profession. So much the worse! If it had failed under the conduct of a less able commander, we might still have hoped

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to succeed hereafter, by supplying his place with a better. As it is, I see no resource. If I should vindicate his courage, by former instances of it which might be produced; I doubt that my disculpating him from the charge of fear, would awaken in some of you a suspicion of a less defensible motive for that retreat. If we throw it back upon any defect in the original plan, we can raise from thence no better fund of comfort for ourselves. For, if God in anger rises up against a people for its punishment, it matters little, whether he executes his purpose by infatuating their counsels, or by intimidating their attempts.

Let you and I, my friends, accuse nobody, but take the blame upon ourselves: whoever bears the blame, we know who must endure the punishment. Let us suffer quietly, as we do most justly. We know not perhaps exactly where to fix principally this miscarriage—but we know, that by our factions and divisions most of us, by our other sins all of us, have been accessaries to it at least. Take one instruction from it, the only advantage that can now be made of it. The ablest counsellors, the best qualified commanders,



commanders, must fail, when they consult or act for a people who have not the Lord for their God. "Thy name, O Lord, is a tower of strength. O help us against the enemy, for vain is the help of man!"

But it is mere mockery to ask the assistance of God against the enemy, while we are strengthening his hands by unnatural division and dissensions. Instead of retarding, we hasten the stroke of Divine vengeance, and pull upon ourselves that heavy sentence, which sooner or later must pass upon every "kingdom that is divided against itself."

If we have been hitherto deaf to the calls of religion, one should think that considerations of interest would at last compel us into the firmest bonds of union amongst ourselves. But let us not suffer more ingenuous principles to lose their hold upon us. Let the love of God, the command of Christ, and the hope of immortality, lead us from every partial view, to a generous sense of duty and the public good. Let us look back to our fore-fathers, and see them possessed of the whole kingdom of France, with an army but little superior to that

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which so prudently turn'd it's back on the first sight of the coast. Let us look forward to posterity, and see our children, perhaps, carried captive into the land which our fathers conquered: unless we take care to found their courage on their rock, and direct it by the love of their country; to train them up in the path of unanimity, which is the road to glory. When we thus consider ourselves as men and Christians, it will be impossible for us to forget that we are subjects. The hoary head of Majesty cannot fail to inspire every honest heart with the tenderest sentiments of humanity as well as of loyalty. The pleasing ties of nature must add fresh strength to the civil obligations which bind us to the venerable father of our country. If, after so long, so equitable, so indulgent an administration of government, we want new arguments for our allegiance, and new proofs of his affection for Our country, we may have them both, by looking upon the distress to which, for our sake, he has so lately exposed his Own!

The horrors which they and their neighbours on the continent have so severely felt,



may serve to convince us how much we owe to Providence, for the advantage of our situation; and make us careful, by the strictest unity, to check every the most remote hope our enemies may have conceived of being able to make this island the scene of war.

God has hitherto, indeed, been pleased to preserve us from another instrument of his vengeance, from famine; but, as if we were judicially determined to turn every blessing into a curse, we have artfully contrived to bring it upon ourselves. It is now not only our punishment, but our crime. By different practices, in the various stages of preparing our bread, the price is generally exorbitant; and what you purchase, often dangerous, and sometimes pernicious. How can that man, who has any hand in so unexampled a mixture of fraud and cruelty, put up his petition to Heaven to give us our daily bread, when he is conscious to himself, that he prevents literally with his hand what he prays for with his lips? In the mean time the "poor crieth," and "the Lord heareth him," and will undoubtedly, if this be suffered to continue, be "avenged on such a nation as this." Thou that shouldst be

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a father to the poor, art thou become his executioner! He pays for bread, and thou givest him a stone.

If we would put a stop effectually to the rising wrath of God, let the care of the poor be our first concern; for their Redeemer is mighty! Let your alms accompany your fasting and your prayers. Make your Fast such as will need no future one; your repentance such as you shall not be forced hereafter to repent of. Charity is the natural offspring of self-denial and humiliation! one proper fruit of repentance and reformation. And that you may not want, while your hearts are warm with resolutions of obedience, an opportunity of letting your bounty flow in a copious stream, by exercising this now necessary, this always delightful part of your duty, a collection is appointed to be made at the doors, for those who do not receive the common alms of the parish, in this time of scarcity and distress; of scarcity and distress, not of God's making, but our own!

You are sensible, that every virtue you practise, will be thrown into the scale which weighs for the prosperity of your country; and that every vice you indulge, will help



to turn the balance to the other side. You know likewise, that beneficence is a sacrifice most acceptable to God; that a hard heart is an abomination to him; that all you have done, or mean to do this day, without this, is nothing—that this, added to your other virtues, may suspend the wrath of God, and stay his hand. For the love of Christ then, for the love of your country, for the sake of your own souls, be charitable, be liberal. And may that God who requires, and has enabled you to offer, accept your offering!

## S E R M O N VII.

*Arguments for Charity.*

I PET. iv. 10.

*As every one hath received the gift, minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

**T**HE considerations, by which men may provoke themselves and each other to love and to good works, are many and very different; by the very constitution of our nature we are led, we are insensibly drawn by the cords of a man, to compassionate misery in whatever shape it appears, and to relieve it in whatever manner we are able: this is a call of nature, which, tho' silent, is always powerful, and sometimes irresistible; it excites in us an uneasy and troublesome feeling at the sight or hearing of distress, which we cannot overcome without doing a violence to our natural propensity, and which obliges us, for our own ease,



ease, to consult that of others. And when we have followed this generous impulse of nature, when, in compliance with this divine impression upon our minds, we have endeavoured to remove, and have been successful in removing, the weight under which our fellow-creature was labouring, the satisfaction we feel in consequence of it is beyond any pleasure of sense; it exceeds the pain we felt while we were perceiving the pangs and throws of a wretched object, and even equals the pleasure which that very object itself is sensible of when it is relieved from its affliction; in this circumstance it is true, that it is as blessed to give as to receive; in the consequences of this happy temper it is more so; for as this most excellent, most delightful disposition is indulged and becomes habitual to us by exerting itself in the constant exercise of goodness and mercy, it diffuses a perpetual serenity and satisfaction over our hearts, and supplies the merciful mind with a continual feast. So little comparable to this solid, this social delight, which results from the reflection of having prevented or removed the difficulties of others, are all the narrow and contracted notions of the co-

vetous, or the giddy rounds of the libertine; that if the covetous man knew how much better interest his riches would bring him by being bestowed on the necessities of the wretched than by his hoarding them up useless at home; and if the prodigal could conceive how much more pleasure he would have from the same fountain than he ever had, or ever can have, from squandering them away wantonly abroad, they would both become charitable for the very reasons which now hinder them from being so, and in compassion to themselves would learn to compassionate the miseries, and to supply the wants, of other men.

The immediate satisfaction, then, which arises to a man's own mind from the exercise of charity, that kind of charity I am now speaking of, which consists in relieving the natural and spiritual wants of men, is no small, no weak inducement to the practice of it.

Nor does the possession of this amiable quality contribute more to the peace and comfort of a man's own mind, than it does to conciliate and secure the esteem of all other men. A liberal man does of all others  
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stand fairest in the opinion of his neighbours. The being endowed with this single good quality makes many little defects and blemishes in other respects to be overlooked; so that in this sense it is true that "charity does cover the multitude of sins." I speak not this to encourage any man to think of screening his folly by his charity; nor do I think it commendable in any other to suffer himself to be bribed, even by a virtue, into a good opinion of a person who is wanting in many others; but thus much follows clearly from this observation, that if liberality has such a bewitching power in it, to make us forget many failings in a defective character, it must entirely engage our affections when it crowns the virtues of a complete one.

And indeed it has been frequently observed, that this virtue has alone been dignified with the name of *humanity*; a term which comprehends in it every excellence belonging to our nature, as if it were in itself an abstract and compendium of the whole duty of man. How desirable this character is, may be still farther seen, by considering that there is no man, how much

much soever he may deserve, that does not detest the contrary.

So that, if the things which are of good report be at all deserving of our consideration, a benevolent and humane disposition must deserve it greatly. The satisfaction which arises in our own breast from the exercise of charity is not greater than the credit which arises from it in the opinion of other men.

And this effect of charity outlives the giver and the gift; it extends beyond the grave, it embalms and preserves the memory of the charitable man. "He hath dispersed abroad, and given to the poor; the remembrance of his beneficence endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour." Nay, even those from whom it was given, shall not entirely lose the benefit. The blessing of what he has given away, as well as of what he has left, shall descend to his posterity. "His seed shall be mighty upon earth, his generation shall be blessed!" What he has sown in bounty, they shall reap in blessing.

The regard, therefore, for a family, which is too often made a reason for withholding our alms, is a very strong reason for bestow-

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ing them; and if we add to this, what daily experience tends to demonstrate, how few have been made really happier by an overgrown fortune, how many have been absolutely undone by it, we may think it but too just a judgement of the Almighty to convert those riches to the curse of our own families, which we have heaped together, without attending to the wants or merits of others, whom they were lent us barely to relieve or reward. "The rust of your gold and silver," says St. James, "shall bear witness against you:" it would have wore off, if they had been employed as they ought to be; for they receive their splendor from their use: as waters corrupt, and sink in the standing pool, but flow with purity and sweetness through the running stream.

The nature of riches, as they are in themselves, whether we consider their real use or their uncertainty, is a very prevailing inducement to those who are in possession of them to abound in acts of charity and beneficence: consider their use; they give you food and raiment; and when they have given you that, if you expect more from them,

them, you must be disappointed: if, having that, you are not content, you will never be contented, whatever you have. Religion does not forbid you a decent provision for the necessities and conveniences of your family and yourselves; and it is out of the power of all the riches in the world to give you more.

This, if you consider their use! still further, if you take their uncertainty into account. They are as contingent as what is most so; they make themselves wings, and fly away, eluding all the arts which you invent to confine them, perhaps before you are well secured in the possession of them; frequently before you can determine to whom you shall bequeath them. Remember the case as it is stated in the gospel. A person as full of wealth, and knowing as little what he should do with it, as the richest amongst you may do, gave orders for the enlarging of his barns, forgetting that the necessities of the hungry were large enough to contain all that he had to spare; and forgetting too, that there could be no other use to him from the increase of his stores,



stores, but to behold them with his eyes, and even that was more than was allotted him: for what says the wise Dispenser of all things? "Thou fool! this night  
"shall thy soul be required of thee, and  
"then whose shall all those things be which  
"thou hast provided? He heaped up riches,  
"but could not tell who was to gather them.  
"So is he, saith our Saviour, who layeth up  
"treasure for himself, but is not rich to-  
"wards God." And, in consequence of this, he exhorteth those that heard him,  
"to give alms! to provide for themselves  
"bags which wax not old, a treasure in the  
"heavens that faileth not, where no thief  
"approacheth, neither moth corrupteth."  
As if he had said, "Shine away the super-  
"fluity of your wealth; the only country  
"where your substance is liable to no shock  
"is heaven, the only creditor who cannot  
"fail is God, and the only secure fund is  
"charity."

Both the use therefore, and the uncertainty of riches, are separately and jointly exceeding strong motives to charity!

The relation which subsists between us and the objects of our charity is another earnest

earnest and prevailing call upon us to be charitable. Are they not men? of the same nature, of the same necessities to which we ourselves are subject? children of one common parent, professors of one common faith, heirs of one common hope? He is not a man, who can be unconcerned at the pressing concern of any man. The ties of family, of kindred, of country, ought all to have their hold upon us, as they stand in the order of nature: but when those have had their turn, or are dissolved, even the common connexions of humanity put in a claim which requires to be heard. Consider yourself as standing in need of the assistance of those who have no nearer relation to you than as you are a man; would you drop that plea for their protection? No! You cannot therefore refuse to another what you would, in the like circumstances, challenge for yourself!

As men then, we are obliged to pay attention to the necessities of men. God, who made of one blood all the nations of the earth, expects from us that we should not hide ourselves from our own flesh!

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The imitation of God is a strong incentive to do good as far as we have power to do it. Who would not wish to be as like God as he may be! And there is no one of God's excellent attributes in the exercise of which he more delights than in shewing mercy and goodness! He *is* good and *does* good! He giveth to all men plenteously, and upbraideth none! Wouldst thou emulate his inextinguishable blaze, throw around the rays he has communicated, and warm the little sphere in which thou art placed!

Nor is his doing good to all a stronger argument to thy charity, than the particular blessings he has conferred on thee. This is part of the argument in the text: "As every man hath received the gift, minister the same one to another;" but this is not the whole, for it follows, "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God!" We are here laid under a twofold obligation, an obligation of gratitude for what God has been pleased to put us in possession of, and an obligation of debt for that part of it with which he has intrusted us, not for our own only, but for others use!

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If God had given us all that we have freely, it had been our duty to make some acknowledgement to him as a benefactor; as he has only bestowed it conditionally, it is so to make up our account with him as a master!

I shall speak to these points separately, but shortly; from whence you will learn one reason, and the proportion of your beneficence, "as every one hath received the gift." The objects and occasions of it, "minister the same to each other;" to all men, as they appear to want, and you are able to give them, assistance. And a yet stronger ground of duty, "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

First, I shall illustrate this plain truth, That whatever we have is received; it is a part, whatever it be, of the manifold grace of God, of that inexhaustible and infinitely various favour or bounty of his, which shoots out into so many branches, which divides itself into so many streams.

Nothing, sure, can serve more to awaken our thankfulness, and excite our charity, than this mortifying question, than this upbraiding consideration: Who made thee to

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differ from another? and what hast thou that thou hast not received? Consider of what thou art composed! He who made the heavens and the earth, who called the huge mass of which the universe is composed out of nothing; who was under no direction but that of his own wisdom, under no controul but that of his own will, might have left thee in the original nothing out of which he was pleased to call thee! What need had he of that lump of clay! What discoverable defect would there have been in the immense circuit of matter, on account of that little portion of dust of which thou art made?

But, even after he had made it, he might have left it still undistinguished from the common heap, as once it was, as again it will be: it would have been bounty in him to have conferred upon thee the gifts of life and sense! of life in any shape! of sense in any degree!

It would then have been matter of his goodness, and of thy gratitude, if he had endued thee with the least glimmering of perception, if he had placed thee in the rank of creatures which are now most contemptible,

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and most loathsome in thy eyes; the meanest insect, the most abject reptile! It would have been no inconsiderable advancement from this stage of being, to have been enabled to traverse the air, or to take thy pastime in the stream; to be pent up in the fold, or to have ranged over the plain. I say, if thou hadst received but these gifts from God, if he had made thee to differ only in this manner from other animals, thou wouldst, even then, have been justly called upon, amongst other creatures that have breath, and above many that have it, to "praise the Lord." But as the case now stands, the highest of these are not so much above the lowest, nor the lowest above the earth from which it is derived, as thou art above them all. And what art thou, that he should be so mindful of thee! He has made thee a little lower than the angels, to crown thee with glory and honour. He has made thee to have dominion over the works of his hands. He has put all things in subjection under thy feet. All sheep and oxen, yea and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, the fishes of the sea, and whatsoever

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passeth through the paths of the seas! He hath given thee powers, from which creatures swifter than thou art cannot escape, which others that are stronger than thyself cannot resist: he has taught thee arts, by which the products of every other country are made thy own, by which thou canst apply the most unwieldy things in nature to thy use, the most disagreeable to thy pleasure, and the most poisonous to thy health.

Possibly thou mayst be of the number of those who are so far exalted above their brethren, as to excell the multitude of their own species as much in some one, or more instances, as they do the brute creation. Perhaps thou art endued by the good pleasure of thy Creator with higher degrees of bodily perfection: thou mayst abound in health, in strength, in activity, in beauty; probably, in the endowments of thy mind, in sagacity, in recollection, in discernment; in delicacy of imagination, in force of reason, in the flow of eloquence.

Perhaps, again, in those manifold instances of the Divine favour, which are impiously called the gifts of fortune; birth, inherited or acquired wealth, alliances, reputation,

putation, interest, influence, &c. These too are the gifts of God!

Shall I need to remind you of what you experience every moment, his friendly providence and protection! and the promises of its continuance! Not content to have given you the dominion of the earth, he presents to your view the inheritance of heaven! It is as impossible for you to forget, as it is for me to express, the wonders of his love in your redemption by Christ Jesus.

So much for what you have received. Let us now see in what proportion your Bounty should flow: even in the same proportion in which you have received it: "as every one hath received the gift, minister the same. Freely ye have received, freely give." This is a point which every man may better settle with himself than any one can determine for him. Let us deal impartially with ourselves on this head however, and we shall find that even those who labour and work with their hands in honest employments are not exempt from the obligation of giving to him who needeth.

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If so, every remove from the necessity of labour is a new inducement to charity. And as we may see our obligation in some degree by comparing our station with that of men below us, so we may likewise compare ourselves at present with what we may have formerly been. It will be no useless reflexion to recollect, "That what was bounty in us in one circumstance, will be meanness in another." It would be a reproach upon him who has ten talents to give no more than he does who is intrusted only with one.

But enough of the proportion: encourage carefully in yourselves a just sense of the favours you have received, and that will not fail to lead you to discern the proper returns you ought to make for them. I hasten now to the objects and occasions for which God has been pleased to confer his manifold mercies on you. "As every man hath received the gift, minister the same one to another."

The Report which you have heard read twice, and which will now be, in substance, repeated to you, will point out to you many opportunities of expressing your gratitude for these inestimable favours, many demands

upon your benevolence, and open many doors to your compassion.

[Report read.]

From (the substance of) the Report you see how many thousands of your fellow-creatures are made yearly better for the beneficence of those who have gone before you; but, while we commend their charity, we excuse not yours, since you see likewise, though they have done much, there is much still left for you to do; as in every branch of these extensive provisions the objects of charity exceed the funds for it. This is matter of complaint to them; but it will be matter of no complaint to them, and of great satisfaction to yourselves, if you give yourselves an inclination in proportion as God has given you a power of abating the miseries of your brethren.

I shall be short in what I have to say; but I shall speak very plainly, as I speak in the name of Him who has but lent you all which you call your own; and if he were to pluck away the feathers in which he has been pleased to dress us, should we be now called upon to give, or suing to receive mercy? Let our inclinations then to do good, in general,



neral; keep pace with the opportunities we have of doing it, and let the number of our blessings dictate to us the measure of our bounty. And what occasions offer themselves here for displaying it! Is there one instance of necessity, either in body or mind, to which our frail nature is subject, which we do not endeavour either to obviate, or remove, or in some degree relieve, in one or other of these appointments? Is there a necessity, to which human nature is liable, which it is not in the power of men to redress? Shall we complain then of Providence, or of ourselves? Let us adore rather the tender severities of our Maker, who has vouchsafed to found our excellence upon our imperfections, and from our weakness deduce our strength, in making the very infirmities of our brethren the occasion of their virtues, and of our own. If any thing be wanting, take the blame to thyself! Let God be true, and every man a liar.

The first and most epidemical source of misery to individuals, and to society, is the want of proper training in infancy. Your childhood being neglected, your youth is headstrong, and your advanced age always

useless, often burthensome, sometimes even pernicious to the community and to yourselves. These inconveniences we endeavour here to obviate, by easing the industrious parents from the burthen of more than a thousand children every year, or the innocent children from the difficulties which arise from having a wicked parent, or from having none. Consider

How small is the difference in the beginning between a bad man and good one! how wide a distance is made in the progress, both to the persons themselves, and those with whom they are connected! Does not nature plainly teach you this? Of two seeds apparently equal, which you are sowing, suppose it is of wheat, or of some other, any other, grain, how different is the fate of them, as they are thrown into proper soil, or dropped by the way side! Even so fares it with the minds of men. And where canst thou choose a better soil for their culture than this charity? As thou art a friend then to thyself, to the poor, to thy country, to mankind, to the universe, to the cause of virtue, and devoted to the Author of it, lend thy hand to extend the arms of this excellent institution,



stitution, and make it as comprehensive as it is excellent.

And by rectifying this great work of Education, thou wilt make that other part of Correction in a degree unnecessary. Few want the last, who have not originally been wanting in the first. But even this, though evil, while it is necessary, is good; and may have its use, if not to the sufferer, yet perhaps to him who sees him suffer. Happy, if, whom reason cannot reclaim, the fear of correction may! happy for him who can profit at the easy expence of another's punishment, and by another's stripes be healed!

Nay, I make no doubt but the care of Education may prevent in many cases Distraction too; in all those cases which arise from irregular passions, and, which is not the least, nor least dreadful instance of madness, from wild and gloomy and frightful notions of the Author of our being and blessings. Horrible it is from any cause to see that exquisite piece of architecture, the mind of man, like a shattered temple, lie in ruin and confusion; but to see it blasted by that flame, which should at the same time enlighten

lighten and comfort it, is yet more melancholy. O guard us, Heaven, from that last illusion, that keenest instrument of hell, Despair! True religion is a chearing, as well as a burning light; it was only the strange fire of Nadab and Abihu, which consumed those who offered it. Oh! prevent with ease, what it may be difficult to eradicate; and relieve that case which hardly admits a remedy! Oh! express your sense of the high value of your own understanding, by a sober use of it, and by extending a proper care to these unhappy objects, who appear indeed like men, but in reality have nothing left of the human nature but the miseries to which it is subject, being banished, as it were, from the community, and from themselves before their time!

The time would fail me, and if the time would allow me, I should want power to represent faithfully to your imaginations the various calamities of almost fifteen thousand objects, who are thankful for the relief they receive from the other hospitals, and of great numbers, who are yet praying in vain to receive it. Go visit these houses of human infirmity, and of divine discipline! Thou that  
exultest



exultest in health and strength, see how different will be thy state, when thou art divested of either! Take thy pictures of distress here from the life, and indulge the sentiments which thy nature will suggest on the occasion; then reflect, who made thee to differ from the objects that excite thy pity, that demand thy assistance; then remember that thou art but “a steward of the manifold grace of God!”

The blessings you have received have not been thrown into your laps upon your own account merely; for where, then, would have been that fatherly concern, that common care of God over all his children? those tender mercies which extend over all his works?—You are here told for what purposes you have received these gifts, and in what proportions you are to dispense them. “As every man hath received, minister to each other, as stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

God, when he was pleased to put into your hands the abundance of this world's good, enjoined you to dispose of it under the prospect of another: when he thought proper to employ you in the trust, 'tis a mistake to

to suppose that he intended to divest himself of the property !

He has appointed you stewards, not masters, of what he has vouchsafed to put into your possession !

And it is required of a steward that he be faithful. It is the proper duty of those who transact business for others, to employ the owner's property to the uses for which he has designed it. If God had made no condition (after having placed such confidence in you) could you have thought of making no return ?

Since he has charged you with these things for the use of others, it will be the height of injustice to pervert them to your own, or convert them to none !

And who knows how soon he may exact an Account ? Though he has referred the general audit to a late day, he has not so withdrawn himself from the immediate government of the world, as not to make us often sensible, that it is not directed without him.

You know not how soon the wealthiest amongst us may want the charity himself, which he refuses another. Alas ! what is the



the substance of any individual to Him! The kingdoms of the earth are his, and he giveth them to whomsoever he will. He changes the greatest property in an instant; and then, what part have you in all your possessions, but that which you have bestowed as you ought! He armeth the elements against us; he bringeth low and lifteth up! He poureth contempt upon princes, and destroyeth all the distinctions amongst men! So absolutely does he retain the disposal of all things, though he permits us at his pleasure to partake of them for a while, “that no man can assure himself  
“what one moment may bring forth.”

He confounds and overturns things which seem most fixed, by channels imperceptible to us; a standing admonition to us of his sovereignty, and our dependance; a lasting warning to fidelity in every trust, for the execution of which we shall so certainly, and may so suddenly, be called to account!

“Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom the Lord shall make ruler over  
“his household, to give them their portion of  
“meat in due season?”

“Blessed

“Blessed is that servant whom his Lord,  
“when he cometh, shall find so doing!”

You see by how many and by what powerful arguments a man is encouraged to acts of liberality: whether he consider the pleasure or the credit which will arise from his beneficence; whether he look forward to the blessings which generally attend the posterity of the liberal, or the curse which too often hangs over the house of the covetous, whom God abhorreth: whether he reflect how little of all his wealth he can in reality enjoy himself, or how slender a security he has for the continuance and the disposal of the rest; whether he look upon the close affinity there is between him and those who want his help, or the amiable example of that over-ruling Power, who is the common friend and father of them both; whether he turn his eyes upon the favours he has received, or upon the end for which they were conferred upon him; each of these considerations, when single, call upon him, and when they are united, one should hope, would compel him to be charitable.

If, therefore, either your own satisfaction,  
or the opinion of other men; if the hope of  
peculiar



peculiar protection, or the fear of uncommon miseries on those whose happiness is wound up in your own; if the true use, or the great uncertainty of all that you possess; if the kindred infirmities of those who look up for your assistance; if the wise conduct or high authority of Him, who has put it in your power to give it; if a grateful sense of inestimable mercies, or a faithful execution of the most important trusts, be considerations, which cannot fail to influence every man in some degree, and the best men in the highest; then “as every one hath received  
“the gift, minister the same one to another,  
“as good stewards of the manifold grace of  
“God.”

To the King eternal, immortal, invisible,  
the only great and good and glorious  
God, be all honour and power and  
praise ascribed for ever!

SERMON

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S E R M O N VIII.

*Christian Instruction one principal  
Instance of Charity.*

---

LUKE vii. 22.

*To the poor the gospel is preached.*

**A**MONGST the infinite sorts of wretchedness under which this ever-changing and corrupted state of ours is perpetually labouring, there is no one which seems more to deserve the compassion, or to call more loudly for the assistance, of all thinking men, than that most deplorable of all disorders, a total ignorance of what we are, and for what end we were made.

Is it possible to conceive a situation more dreadful than his, the eyes of whose understanding are blinded? who is entirely in the dark as to every principle of religious or of moral knowledge: an absolute stranger to all the chearful notices of heavenly truth:  
unacquainted



unacquainted with the providence, or even with the existence, of God: uninformed of that future and immortal life to which the present is only preparatory, and for which it is to be considered merely as an introduction of probation and trial: insensible of the permanent distinctions of right and wrong: uninterrupted by the silent remonstrances of a reproofing mind: let loose from the gentle restraint of human ties; given up to the wild impulse of brutal appetite: who can look upon every virtue without affection, and behold their contraries without abhorrence: neither allured to good by hope, nor deterred by fear from evil?

That this is far from being a wild and imaginary representation of the case and consequences of a thorough want of instruction, I wish we were at a loss for instances to make out the proof: but if the character seem to any one to be too strongly drawn, I shall leave it upon the credit of its author, for it is not mine, but St. Paul's. The picture which that apostle hath left us of the ancient nations is the same in features, though the colouring may differ a little, with that which I have just exhibited to you.

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You shall see it as it was originally drawn by that masterly hand.

He represents them as “strangers to the  
“covenant, having no hope; being without  
“a sense of God in that world which he had  
“made:” as “having their understanding  
“darkened, being alienated from the Divine  
“life, through the ignorance that was in  
“them, because of the blindness of their  
“heart:” As “by nature children of wrath,  
“dead in trespasses and sins:” as “having  
“once walked according to the course of  
“this world, according to the prince of  
“the power of the air; that spirit which  
“even now worketh in the children of dis-  
“obedience:” as “walking in the vanity of  
“their mind, having no sense of shame,  
“giving themselves over unto lasciviousness,  
“to work all kinds of impurity, with an  
“insatiable appetite:” as “having their  
“conversation in the lusts of the flesh; ful-  
“filling the desires of the flesh and of the  
“imagination: foolish, disobedient, deceiv-  
“ed; enslaved to different desires of pleasure,  
“living in malice and envy, hateful and  
“hating one another.”

A repre-



A representation that shocks you! Yet it is one, the ingredients of which are considered by the apostle as the natural and unavoidable product of inward blindness.

But this, you will say, was only the case in those times of darkness at which God, in the secret workings of his providence, is said to have winked. The world, it may be imagined, that part of it at least which is dignified with the Christian name, is now, in this mid-day of revelation, so entirely enlightened, as to leave no room any longer for such horrid suppositions. What farther complaint can there be of ignorance in matters of religion? what possibility for the spreading of that infection, when God himself has prepared so effectual a remedy: when all the truths which have any necessary reference to the present or future state of men, are so clearly published to the world: when the gospel is preached, not only to the mighty, to the rich, to the wise, to the learned; but to the very dregs of the people, to the illiterate, to the ignorant, to the poor: when the knowledge of the glory

of God covers the earth, as the waters when the sea overflows?

Blessed state, indeed, if this were so! But who is so happily ignorant of the mischiefs, of the miseries that surround him, as not to know that this is not? God has undoubtedly provided a remedy sufficient in itself to correct this disorder, and to prevent the effects of it: but what is any remedy before it is applied?

The revelation of the will of God by Jesus Christ is beyond all reasonable doubt a sovereign antidote against all pernicious ignorance to all who are acquainted with it, to all to whom it is known. But what comfort is that to those who know nothing of it? And how great a part that is of those who are included in the common name of Christianity, they who have looked most curiously into the lower, shall I say? or higher scenes of human life, are amazed to find. It is plain beyond contradiction, that (notwithstanding the full manifestation which God has been pleased to make of his good-will towards men, in opening to them the glories of his future kingdom) there is a part,  
and



and that no small one, of the Christian world, which continues to this hour in absolute darkness. And yet who dare allow himself to doubt whether the light, which God has been pleased to propagate in the world, be not answerable to all the purposes of real knowledge and final happiness? How is this? It seems to be contradictory and unintelligible. But one single consideration will reconcile this apparent inconsistency, and make the whole as plain as it is certain.

The moral government of God by Jesus Christ is confessed to contain an universal remedy for all hurtful ignorance; but it affords a remedy for ignorance in such a manner as his natural government does for poverty. He has in his goodness given the earth to the children of men, and the produce of it is sufficient for the support of every man: but what advantage has he from that, who is now perishing for want! He has likewise, in his mercy, given us a light to guide the feet of men into the way of peace, a light sufficient for the direction of every man who cometh into the world: but what information hath he from hence, who is now sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death! It

is undoubtedly as far from the intent of God that any man should want necessary food, as it is that any one should be destitute of necessary knowledge: in either case, he has made an ample provision for the exigences of all; but this provision, though it seems at first to be thrown in common, yet, by the different powers of body and mind with which we are endowed, and by a variety of providential contingences, it becomes at last so unequally distributed, that, far from being dealt alike to each man, it is often intrusted for one in the hands and made subject to the direction of another. Here then begins the defect, and hence arises the complaint. What was intended by God as a peculiar blessing to one part of mankind, by making them the benefactors, and in some sort (may I express it unblamed?) the saviours of each other, becomes, if it be neglected, a common misery to each division of men. To some a crime, in withholding the relief or instruction with which they are intrusted for the good of their brethren; to the rest a misfortune, in not receiving that support or information which was provided for them,



them, but deposited for their use in other hands.

Hence it is, that though God has declared expressly in his law, “that the poor shall “eat and be satisfied,” yet we see them pining in wretchedness, and perishing in distress: though he has as openly assured us in his gospel, that one of the fairest fruits of that gospel is, “that the poor shall have that “comfortable discovery made unto them,” yet we find them involved in a cloud of as thick darkness, as if the day-spring from on high had never visited us, as if life and immortality had not yet been brought to light!

As this consideration serves to vindicate the ways of God, it may also help to regulate the ways of man on this subject. When we reflect with how gracious a condescension Providence has been pleased to admit us into a partnership, as it were, of his works, by leaving some share of his great designs for us to finish, with what a grateful joy should we embrace the happy opportunity of diffusing good to those who want, and reflecting glory on Him who enables us to do so? and

not, like that unjust steward who engrosseth to himself the bounty of his lord, at the same time defraud the poor, and dishonour our Master?

God would want no advocate, if men were as punctual as they should be, in executing the parts which he has assigned to them in his dispensations. These apparent defects in the administration of his providence would then carry the visible marks of wisdom and goodness on the face of them; the want of one man, being supplied by the affluence of another, would lay a lasting foundation for the reciprocal duties of humanity and gratitude; of benevolence on both sides; and God would appear equally wise, equally good, in what he has denied, as in what he has given!

Take heed, therefore, that you rob not the poor of his right, yourselves of a pleasure, and God of his glory; but “let your light  
“so shine before men, that they may see  
“your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” And do this in all instances where he has been pleased to appoint you his instruments to relieve the distresses of your brethren. This would  
open



open a large field for the heart of the benevolent, and for the tongue of the persuasive, exceeding all the powers of one, and equal to the most enlarged capacity of the other. But the occasion confines us now to narrower bounds. For it is not the relief of poverty in general, and in itself, that I am going to recommend to your care; not the relief of poverty, I mean, as it consists in the absolute want of all the natural comforts and conveniences and necessities of life; as it is compounded of hunger and thirst, and nakedness and cold, the loss of friendship, of liberty, the universal desertion of every help which nature grieves for the want of; nor, yet, farther, as it draws on a long catalogue of bodily disorders, beginning sometimes suddenly in pain and misery, ending too often slowly in death: these, I say, are not the lights in which I propose at present to represent poverty unto you, but barely as it exposes men to the want of all proper information relating to the state and condition of their nature. This I take to be by much the most unhappy circumstance which attends  
on

on poverty, more so than all its natural evils united in their most frightful forms.

It is, therefore, to attempt to remove the moral inconveniences of poverty, that I stand now before you as an advocate for the Poor, not supplicating for food only, but for instruction; not for the bread which perisheth, but for that “living bread which cometh down from Heaven;” not intreating you barely to clothe their bodies, but to secure them against the more miserable nakedness of a neglected mind; not soliciting you to provide even against those dreadful diseases, indigence and pain, but to prevent the more malignant disorders of ignorance and guilt. Since the poor are brought under so many disadvantages into this world, let us endeavour at least to infuse that comfortable cordial into their hearts, the hope of a better. And that I may not so far accept the person of the poor as, under the notion of charity, to persuade you to any thing which is not in itself highly reasonable, or by any motive which is otherwise, I shall consider the duty and excellence of preaching the gospel to the poor; and shall encourage you according to  
your



your different stations and abilities to charitable contributions, as a proper exercise of that duty, by shewing you,

That supplying the want of religious instruction to the poor is a very high instance of Christian charity; and that these schools for the poor may be made, and I hope are, an excellent mean of supplying them with religious instruction.

I say then, that to supply the want of religious instruction to the poor is a very high instance of Christian charity.

It is an old observation of one of the most admired authors of antiquity, "that no one thing raises man nearer to a similitude of the Divine nature, than contributing to the welfare of mankind." And it is as certain, that nothing does in fact conduce so much to the happiness of man, either as an individual or in society, as the knowledge and practice of true religion. To propagate the sense of this amongst men, is to provide more effectually for their happiness, than to relieve all the other wants, and to cure all the other diseases in the world. This, therefore, above all things, is to be attempted by him, who is desirous of doing  
the

the greatest and most lasting good to mankind. To compassionate the afflicted, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, are all excellent works, and some may think that the whole (and no doubt a great part) of charity does consist in these; but yet let me shew you a more excellent way, even than that which the apostle accounts most excellent; for as much as charity excels the other virtues, so much does this kind of charity excel all other charities. We have it from his own authority, that a man may give all his goods to the poor, and yet be a stranger to that truly Christian spirit, which puts men upon instructing the ignorant, which impels us to open the eyes of the spiritually blind, and to infuse hope into the desponding soul.

The preservation of any thing, we know, is to be valued in proportion to the estimate we make of the thing which is preserved; as much, therefore, as the mind of man is confessedly preferable to any thing else which relates to him, so much is this kind of charity in reason to be preferred to any other. The excellence of every charity must, in the nature of the thing, be computed from the

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*one principal Instance of Charity.* 189

the advantage arising from thence to the respective objects of them; and what is there that we can put in competition, upon the foot of advantage to men, with the Gospel of Jesus Christ? It is the charity of God himself! I may be allowed to call it so, since it is peculiarly and by way of eminence so called throughout his whole Revelation: it is that last best gift, which he, in the excess of his goodness, has so freely bestowed upon the children of men; in which every other glimmering of his favour, which he has been pleased, in a diversity of manner and degree, to communicate to his servants, seem to unite as in a centre; and to which any one, or all of them, bear no other proportion than as the early dawn to the meridian sun.

And as every thing, as it has a clear preference in nature and reason, is always considered as having it in the injunction of Christ, it may make the argument come more home to you, when you see in what rank and degree of precedence this duty stands in the opinion, by the declaration, of Christ himself. The passage, of which the words I first repeated to you are a part, is  
worth

worth observing, and will set this matter in the strongest light.

The disciples of the Baptist came to Jesus, by order of their master, to have a doubt removed, which some of them had conceived, relating to his deputation from God: it seems, they found Jesus (as indeed his custom was) instructing the people, and giving credit to his instructions by exerting the most uncommon powers. They propose their own or their master's scruple to him; with regard to which he returns nothing directly in answer, but bids them barely relate, upon their return to the prophet, what they had seen and heard: "that the blind  
" had their sight restored; the lepers were  
" made clean from their leprogies; the deaf  
" recovered the sense of hearing; the lame  
" ceased to be so; even the dead were raised  
" to life again, and the *poor* had the *gospel*  
" *preached to them.*"

One cannot help observing, that there is evidently a gradation of ideas in this account, and "preaching the gospel to the  
" poor" has plainly the preference in common construction to all the miraculous facts, even to that master-piece of all, the Resur-  
rection



rection from the dead. A plain confession, that the most amazing instances of Divine power are considered by God himself as inferior to this simple effort of his goodness. The first seems to be represented barely as the evidence, the latter absolutely as the end, of his mission: the one a necessary seal of his ministry, the other the actual exercise of his office.

And this, in so many words, he declares it to be, when he applies that emphatical prophecy of Isaiah to himself; "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me for that cause for which he anointed me. He sent me to preach the gospel to the poor;" that is, in other words, "to heal those that are broken in heart, to proclaim release to the captive, to give sight to the blind, to abate the pain of the wounded, to publish the acceptable year of the Lord."

The whole prophecy is clearly relative to the moral state of man; and represents a change in that to be the grand and ultimate design of the coming of Christ: in what other sense, indeed, could he be said to give liberty to the captive, who died himself a prisoner, and whose immediate followers were

were exposed to persecution and chains ! or what, again, in point of real profit to the world, was the healing some bodily diseases in any particular age, the influence of which could hardly go beyond the next, in comparison of the greater and more extensive cure of a darkened, of a disordered mind ? a cure, without which, life itself is but as a fleeting vision, as an uneasy dream ; and immortality, neither to be wished nor to be endured !

Let us remember, too, “ that as the duty “ is delightful, the neglect of it is unpardonable.” What wretch would shut up the light, which will not shine less upon him after he has communicated it to a thousand others ? You tremble at that barbarous usage of the Heathen, in exposing their infants to hunger and cold, or beasts of prey ! And are you Christians, then, who suffer your children to perish for lack of knowledge ? exposing them to that destroyer of souls, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour ; and, by giving them no principles, or worse than none, make it better for them that they had never been born ?

Having



Having thus shewn you how high a rank preaching the gospel to the poor possesses amongst the number of Christian duties; I proceed to let you see, that contributing to these schools of the poor is a proper exercise of this duty, as they are a certain mean of instilling the principles of religion and a godly life into the minds of the poor. Not that I would have it imagined, while I consider this as the greatest, that it is the only want which is supplied by these institutions; it is well known how many other necessities are obviated here, which, though inferior to this, are no light burden to those who are struggling under them: the detail of which might awaken compassion in the most insensible, and steal a tear from the eye of mirth and gaiety. But of this perhaps at some other time and place. Let us now look upon these schools in this single point of view, as a provision for the religious principles of the poor.

The simplest child cannot here be ignorant that there is one only Potentate, who alone possesses immortality, by whom all things subsist: "That this power, though we see him not, is yet always present in effect; and

does see, and does preside over all ; that no distance of place can remove us from his reach ; no length of time erase us from his remembrance, nor the most palpable darkness screen us from his sight. That he is absolutely unbiaſſed and impartial, making no distinction, nor admitting any amongst his reasonable creatures, but that which piety and virtue makes. That perfect as he is in himself, yet in condeſcenſion to our infirmities he has appointed, according to the inexplicable counſel of his own will, a man like ourſelves, one once as poor as the pooreſt of us now, to be the governor, the interceſſor, the propitiation, and the judge of the moral world ; the rule of whoſe government is, on the part of thoſe to whom it is revealed, *an honeſt endeavour to comply with the whole will of God in conformity to the law of our nature*: on his part, aſſiſtance, by the gracious influences of his holy Spirit on our feeble aims at penitence and piety ; pardon for unavoidable weakneſs, and even for wilful offence repented of and forſaken ; reconciliation to God, and a well-grounded hope of happineſs beyond conception and without end in his future



future kingdom. In defect of the condition on our part, aversion on the part of God, rejection from his favour, with a terrible expectation of all, and more than all, those horrors which guilt, remorse, shame, anguish and despair can suggest to a mind conscious of the infinite happiness it has lost, of the inconceivable misery it has incurred, by not embracing the offers of God's all-meeting mercy, by forcing the efforts of his unwilling vengeance."

This is an abstract of that gospel which is preached to these poor; this is the salutary lesson which may be learned in this school.

I do not pretend that the knowledge of these truths shall always and every where produce the practical inference, and make those who know them act as if they had them ever in their eye: but there can be no doubt that they will influence as far as any moral arguments can influence, and the more, as they are more intimately and habitually known: they are as an anchor to the soul, safe and firm; it may be subject to be tossed, notwithstanding, by every little storm, to be in danger from a great one:

but no common violence can force it from its hold.

But Religion is not taught here as an empty speculation, but as a rule to go by. Children are trained up early to act those parts for which Providence seems to have designed them in this life, in hope of being applauded in the next: they are habituated to do what they are born to do; at a time when impressions are easiest to make, and, when once made, most difficult to erase. Religion, thus early interwoven with their employments, becomes the colour of their life. Their duty and their devotion go hand in hand. At the plough, or at the loom, or in whatever honest labour they are engaged, every act of their station is a reasonable service to God, and the lifting up of their hands an acceptable sacrifice.

Some persons have entertained wonderful apprehensions that religion, and as much learning as may help a man to employ himself in it, may prove a great obstruction to labour, and of disservice to the public. I know not what religion this must be; I am sure, it cannot be the Christian. A religion, whose



whose chief end is to teach us the employment of every talent, cannot lead us to neglect the improvement of any; unless you can be led into idleness and injustice, by being laid under a double obligation to industry and fidelity. Methinks we should not grudge the poor the knowledge of the alphabet, if it were but to have them able to read this short lesson, which I fancy those who scruple that matter most, would have no objection to see written in letters of gold in every seminary of instruction for the poor.

“ Servants obey in all things your masters,  
“ not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but  
“ in singleness of heart, fearing God: and  
“ whatever you do, do heartily; as to the  
“ Lord, and not to men; knowing that of  
“ the Lord ye shall receive the reward of  
“ inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ!  
“ But he that doth wrong shall receive for  
“ the wrong he hath done; and there is no  
“ respect of persons with God.”

Others again are alarmed lest Reason should suffer by the early introduction of religious prejudice. Leave reasonable creatures,

tures, say they, to the direction of their reason; what have they to do with any judgement but their own? Let their religion be the result of free inquiry; it will be time enough to fix upon one, when they have finished the other! These we presume are philosophers, professors of humanity in every sense, who, in compassion to the miseries to which we are subjected by the tyranny of education, offer their generous aid to free us from the bondage of prejudice. Do they understand that nature they are so ready to relieve? If they sow no good seed in the minds of children, what insurance have they against this wicked world, that it shall sow no bad seed in them? If they will not take the pains to inculcate habits of religion into young people, who tells them that they will not choose for themselves other habits, and of another cast? Is it Reason then alone that governs in the infancy of human nature? Is there nothing of a lower stamp, which is with care, which is with difficulty, by our virtue, or by calling in a higher power, to be regulated, if not subdued? You are a parent, suppose; of the variety of dishes which are served up at table, do you allow your child



to choose where he pleases, and in what degree, taking for granted his reason will direct him, and that there is no danger of his being mistaken? I dare say, you are too wise to indulge his appetite to the destruction of his health! But is not this interposition an infringement on natural liberty? It is; you must consult however the health of his body: I will not think so meanly of you, as not to presume you have at least an equal regard to the vigour of his mind. Is there no danger that his taste may lead him as much to his hurt in his amusements? in his opinions? in his acquaintance? Do you leave him in these to his judgement, and to the decisions of his never-erring reason, which, if not just now, will not fail, upon experience, to remonstrate? Let us see how far you may be able to correct what you are unwilling to prevent! Let his body be bent double for want of care, and bid him walk upright when he comes to a sense of his deformity! Will his reason teach him to articulate? or to alter any disagreeable accent which he has imbibed with his nurse's milk? Ah simple wisdom! What husbandman neglects the seed-time, and

expects the harvest? Let an unkindly spring blast his bloom, and when will that autumn come that will yield thee fruit?

Thou fanciest thyself all this while to abound in good-nature as thou dost in sense. Equally, I own, in both: let us weigh this honestly. Thou art fixed here in a world in which these infants have just got footing. They walk as thou art pleased to direct them. They depend upon thy experience, and such as thine; and thou art in trust (as each generation is for the succeeding one) for their virtue, and for their happiness. Thou knowest (if thou hast thought enough to know any thing) that in this wilderness, through which we are passing, there is but one sure road to the point at which they aim; it is impossible to say how many there are in which they may be entangled and lost. Wilt thou then give them a plain direction and repeat it often? or wilt thou leave them, by fatal experience, to find that they have been miserably mistaken?

Or, they are embarked in a long voyage, upon a boisterous sea; wilt thou supply them with thy compass, or leave them to  
the



the uncertain guidance of moon and stars !  
Is not thy philosophy madness, and thy tenderness inhumanity ?

It is no easy matter for the best of parents, with all the biases they can throw in by instruction, example, and habit, on the side of virtue, to bring their children exactly to the mark. How much less then is to be expected from those who have no parents, or poor and perhaps vicious ones. It is bad enough to be without a guide ; to have a wicked one, is still worse : and what a seminary for youth are the streets of this populous city, where the contagion of wickedness insinuates itself at every sense, before they are capable of distinguishing between good and evil ! Hence arises a peculiar propriety for erecting any school of virtue in this place : where tares spring up so fast, it requires a double share of attention to cultivate the better seed. We talk of a Christian country ; but I should be glad to know in what vices we fall short of any idolatrous nation ? Christianity is to the moral world, what the sun is to the natural. The sun, we see, may shine with all its lustre, and yet there are places of the earth so unfortunately situated,

ated, that no ray of light can ever reach them. "And if the light which is in us be "darkness, how great is that darkness!"

Let us now look back a little, and take a short review of the case, as it respects the poor, the public, and ourselves.

First, let us consider it in reference to the poor: the question on that foot is plainly this, Whether, by instilling a proper sense of things into their minds, you would lay a foundation for their virtue and happiness; or, by leaving them still in the dark, expose them to the contagion of wickedness and misery? We have seen to what degrees of wretchedness the ignorance of necessary truth did actually sink the old world, and we know the case is even now little better with those who continue unacquainted with the gospel; and there is strong probability, that the generality of the poor must inevitably be of that number, without the help of some such provisions as these. By this method you put them in possession of truths which are the best remedy for all the inconveniences, and the strongest security against all the dangers, of their condition. We may reflect, therefore, that by such contributions



we attempt, at least, to relieve a number of unhappy objects from all that load of impiety, blasphemy, dishonesty, discontent, and envy, to which the uninstructed poor are laid under strong temptations, by the very circumstances of their station; and let that reflection, on all proper occasions, influence our charity.

Consider it once more in its tendency towards the public.

These poor creatures are not only to be considered in themselves, but as members of society; not only as capable of a private happiness or misery, but as capable too of influencing the happiness or misery of the community: their improvements, consequently, in knowledge and duty, or the want of them, will be sensibly felt by the public, when they are thrown upon the world. As they are generally destined to servitude, it is worth considering how much the ease and security of families do necessarily depend upon the integrity and fidelity of those who serve them. These infants, as they are now, will, before we are aware, have their parts to act in the business and intercourse of mankind; and it is yet in some degree

degree in our own power to determine which way they shall act them. By proper care, or by neglect of their religious principles, you may make them either an industrious, modest, humble, useful, or an idle, dissolute, insolent, pernicious body of citizens. You may make them the ornament or disgrace, the universal advantage or common pest, of society. Think which of these presents you would choose to make to the public: will you send a flock of sheep, or let loose a den of wild beasts amongst them? And let that consideration, as opportunity offers, excite your bounty.

We will take a last view of it as it concerns yourselves. If you have no regard for the virtue of these children, if you have no concern for the good of society; both which I must conclude to be directly otherwise; you certainly have some regard for yourselves. And who does not see how much his own happiness depends upon the principles of those about him? who does not know how very different the state of his present felicity must unavoidably be, as he is accidentally involved with those that have principles, or those that have none, or worse than none?



none? and who does not see too, that if they are not taught the true gospel which breathes “good-will towards men, and peace on earth;” the promotion of which gives the truest glory to God on high; they may soon be instructed in another gospel, which, by divorcing religion from virtue, and by that means confounding the distinction between good and evil, must be as dishonourable to the Creator, as it may prove injurious to his creatures?

It has been shewn too, “that it is the great duty of every Christian to propagate the light of Christianity;” and this is, perhaps, the only way that many, the best way that most of us, have of performing this duty. We are laid under an agreeable necessity, therefore; and woe be to them (as the great apostle said of himself) who do not, in this sense, “preach the gospel.” Let this consideration make you chearful givers! Think only, when Providence calls upon you in any of these human ministrations, that “this mite of mine, whatever it be, which this moment is of no use to me, and may be employed the next to my hurt, may, when it is thrown into this  
5 “channel,

“ channel, be converted into so much know-  
 “ ledge and virtue to the poor, so much ease  
 “ and security to the public, and lay a founda-  
 “ tion, in conjunction with my other duties,  
 “ for my reception, when I fail here, into  
 “ habitations which shall last for ever.”

In short, if the state of the world, with regard to religion and manners, must always have been as bad as we see it once was, without a plain rule of life, guarded by reasonable hopes and fears, from the engaging prospects of Divine love, and the horrible apprehensions of abused mercy; if the general publication of the gospel can make no visible alteration in the case, unless it be personally, and practically, and early inculcated; if this be a trust, as confessedly it is, reposed in every Christian, and required of every one in proportion to his opportunity and his power; if an individual, however sensible of the duty, might yet be diffident of his ability, or doubtful as to the direction of it: how are the interests of private and public happiness indebted to that useful Society, whose general design it is, to convert the least supple of every charitable Christian, by the best methods that shall offer, to “ the  
 “ promotion

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“promotion of Christian knowledge:” a Society, which, as it intends only the advancement of common good, is always as ready to be informed, as assisted in the ways of advancing it; which is willing to give the plainest and the shortest answer to every objection, by reforming, as far as possible, the thing which is objected to; which is attempting to do the very best thing that can be done, by the very best means that can be suggested? And as example \* is ever more powerful than precept, being a lesson which the most illiterate can read, a direction by which the most unthinking cannot be misled; and as the higher this light is placed, the more diffusive must its influence be; what an accessional support must this Society receive from the declaration of our most excellent Prince, who has begun to form his Kingdom upon the model of that for which he is reserved; having proclaimed to all men, “that virtue shall be the only passport to his royal favour; and that he knows of no party amongst his subjects beyond the distinction of Good and Bad.” Happy are the people

\* This Sermon was first published after the proclamation, &c. of his present Majesty.

who,

who, beside all other motives to piety, are drawn by that rare but prevailing argument, the example of their Sovereign !

Go on, illustrious Sire, to fix the stability of your own and your nation's glory on the only solid basis, a Christian's hope. Let others arrogantly assume the titles of "Most Catholic," and "Most Christian;" whilst it is your just praise to be literally, to be truly both; who afford the best defence to our holy faith, the surest patronage to true religion, a religious life; who animate by your conduct what is enjoined by your authority. May the all-pervading Spirit cooperate with the dispositions it inspires into your royal breast; may your subjects as universally emulate as they approve, till the influence of your high character shall have diffused itself beyond the circle of your immediate presence to the remotest isles of this united country, till these happy kingdoms become the ornament of earth, and the delight of Heaven !

"Hæ tibi erunt Artes---Pacique imponere  
"morem."

SERMON



S E R M O N IX.

*Division an eventual Consequence of  
CHRIST'S Religion.*

MATTH. X. 34.

*Think not that I am come to send peace on  
earth: I came not to send peace, but a  
sword.*

Or as in LUKE xii. 51.

*Suppose ye that I am come to give peace  
on earth? I tell you, nay, but rather  
division.*

**A**RE these the words of Christ Jesus,  
or of Mahomet? do they breathe the  
spirit of the Gospel, or of the Alcoran? can  
this be the declaration of that gentle, that  
compassionate, that benevolent friend of  
mankind, or the menace of one accustomed  
to rapine, to tyranny, to murder? does it  
sound like the voice of God proclaiming

P

“peace

“ peace on earth, good-will towards men,”  
or of the destroying angel with his drawn  
sword denouncing the excision of mankind!

This account of the Messiah given by  
himself is surely not, at the first view, con-  
sistent with those antient delineations of the  
prophets by which it was shadowed out and  
prefigured, where much was promised of the  
extraordinary tranquillity and glory of his  
expected reign; that prince of peace, of the  
increase of whose government and peace  
there should be no end, and whose throne  
should be established in judgement and justice  
for ever.

There can be no doubt that these prophe-  
cies describe the mild and social character of  
the Christian dispensation, and point out the  
extreme felicity of a commonwealth erected  
upon the solid principles of piety and bene-  
volence.

But Jesus, to whom every consequence of  
his ministration was known from the be-  
ginning, foreseeing that his kind intentions  
to promote the peace and welfare of the  
world would be counteracted by the folly  
of some men, by the malice of many, and  
by the inattention of all, speaks here of the  
*accidental,*



*accidental*; not of the *natural*, effects of his doctrine; and tells us not what *he designed* should follow, but what *he foresaw* would, in fact, follow from the publication of the gospel: that it would not send peace on earth, but a sword; or that it would rather produce divisions than unity in the world.

In this view, whatever might at first sight appear contradictory to, and irreconcilable with, the outlines of Christianity as drawn by the prophets, and Christ's own account of it, vanishes; and the declaration itself contains a *new prophecy*; the completion of which, at the same time that it reflects shame on all the pretenders to his religion, casts a new light and glory round the head of its Author and his immediate disciples.

We may represent then our blessed Lord, in the words before us, as addressing himself in this manner to his first followers:

“ I know, my friends, that you expect  
“ great things from me, and you have a  
“ right to expect them. Great hopes have  
“ been raised and great promises made in  
“ my name, and they shall all be fulfilled.  
“ But it is probable your expectations may  
“ be more hasty than my designs. It is time  
“ for

“ for you now to know that I have *two*  
 “ *characters*; without which the accounts  
 “ of your prophets would be a heap of in-  
 “ consistency and contradiction. But that  
 “ being once known, the whole is plain and  
 “ perfectly intelligible. I have a *double cha-*  
 “ *raçter*, I say, that I must *first suffer* before  
 “ I can enter into my glory; and he who is  
 “ ambitious of one, must first partake with  
 “ me of the other. This is a hard doctrine;  
 “ but I, who came not to flatter men’s pas-  
 “ sions but to increase their virtue, can make  
 “ no immediate promises to you of uninter-  
 “ rupted security and ease. I myself am  
 “ prepared to face all dangers and death;  
 “ and, if you will be my servants, you  
 “ must prepare yourselves to share quietly  
 “ the same fate with your master. The  
 “ cross, the sword, and other instruments  
 “ of torture and of death, are all the present  
 “ offers I can fairly make. They are un-  
 “ common temptations, it is true; but they  
 “ are such as the great business I am sent to  
 “ execute demands: and he who proposes to  
 “ himself other rewards must seek another  
 “ master. These are the first-fruits of my  
 “ commission,



“ commission, this is the painful pre-emi-  
 “ nence at which you must aspire. For so  
 “ much will the doctors of the Jewish  
 “ church prefer the *appearance* of religion to  
 “ the *reality* of it, that for the sake of one  
 “ they will endeavour to extirpate the other.  
 “ And in this cause you must suffer. Nor  
 “ will the sufferings of my followers end  
 “ with this. For after this storm is blown  
 “ over, and this persecution shall end in the  
 “ destruction of those who began it, an event  
 “ which I will hasten, as a necessary vindi-  
 “ cation of my own authority, an admo-  
 “ nition to other nations, not to touch mine  
 “ anointed, and to do my prophets no harm,  
 “ the Gentiles shall have their prejudices  
 “ against you as well as the Jews; by not  
 “ attending to my doctrines sufficiently to  
 “ understand them, they shall take offence  
 “ at their own mistakes, and shall exert not  
 “ their reason, but their power, to suppress  
 “ a system, which they have not arguments  
 “ to confute, nor honesty to embrace.

“ Nor is this the worst: happy if it were.  
 “ For when this small grain which I am  
 “ sowing shall have fixed its roots, notwith-

“ standing the inclemency of the season,  
 “ being nourished by my blood and yours,  
 “ and shall have spread its branches far and  
 “ wide to afford a shelter for my future  
 “ church, then my own people, being at rest  
 “ from their enemies, shall begin to lose their  
 “ affection for their friends. They shall for-  
 “ get the grand distinction, the immediate  
 “ end of my religion, Peace—under the cover  
 “ of my name they shall defeat my design,  
 “ and being more attached to some indifferent  
 “ ceremony, to some doubtful disputation,  
 “ than to truth and virtue, shall revile,  
 “ torment, and even put to death, those who  
 “ dissent from their most extravagant and  
 “ contradictory comments on my words.”

This we may conceive, I say, to be the de-  
 claration of our blessed Saviour in the text;  
 and this prophetic declaration of his we may  
 see to have been but too literally fulfilled, to  
 the eternal honour of his true religion, to  
 the everlasting confusion of all false pretences  
 to it. First,

By the Jews, in his own and his disciples  
 sufferings and death, Afterwards,

By



By the other nations, in their repeated persecutions of his church.

And, which concludes all, and is worse than all the rest, by the divisions and dissensions of those who equally laid claim to his authority, while they equally opposed his will.

From this source, *in some measure*, the calamities of this [nation flowed; which brought on the entire dissolution of an admirable constitution, both civil and religious, and made this island a field of blood.

This is a sufficient ground, sure, for national, shall I say? or for universal, humiliation before God; in which every one who lays claim to the glorious privileges of Christianity, to whatever sect he belong, by whatever name he may be distinguished, must join with a heart full of contrition, with resolutions of avoiding with care, what he must recollect with horror, that God's best gift should ever have been so horridly perverted by the prejudices of men, that all the efforts of Jewish and of Heathenish malice could never fix so indelible a stain upon Christianity as the dissensions amongst those

who call themselves Christians have done; and that the greatest obstacle to, and indeed the strongest argument against, the propagation of Christianity, has arisen from the divisions and animosities of those who have professed it.

It is as far from my inclination, I hope, as it is from my duty; in this place sacred to religious improvement; on this subject, capable of affording too serious and too sad matter of it; on this day enjoined by national authority, for the promotion of public peace; and before this Assembly, the great assertors of liberty and guardians of our rights; to open the wounds of my country, which have been now long closed, never to be burst asunder by me. Let it be my business rather, as it is my profession, to *pray* for the peace of Jerusalem; and while I touch necessarily, but tenderly, upon the principles and practices by which that peace was interrupted, let it be barely in order to introduce those of another cast, which may effectually for the future secure it.

I shall pursue then the train in which this prophecy of our blessed Lord has been fulfilled,



filled, and shew the fact, “ That the propa-  
“ gation of the Christian religion has actu-  
“ ally, though contrary to the spirit and  
“ design of it, from the first dawn of it to  
“ the event of this day which we are met  
“ together to lament, not brought peace  
“ upon earth, but rather division, and often,  
“ as in this instance, too literally a sword.”

From this fact I shall make such observa-  
tions as the occasion shall seem to justify  
and exact. Let us take a cursory view of  
it from the beginning.

I. The sufferings of our blessed Lord were  
almost as much without a parallel as his  
virtues. There is scarce one page in his  
history, from his birth to his death, that is  
not filled with some melancholy relation of  
his distress. Is there a Jew or a Turk, who,  
abstracted from the prejudice arising from his  
name, can read the last scene of his agonies  
without horror, without tears? And, what  
is at the same time a proof of his integrity  
and of his inspiration, a prophet only could  
have foreseen, an impostor if he had fore-  
seen would have avoided, the storm.

It

It was extremely improbable that he should give offence to a nation which expected him, to whom he was sent to fulfil every expectation that had been raised in them from a multiplicity of promises; with powers too to warrant his commission, exceeding those by which their first institution of policy and of religion had been established. Nor was it an easy matter in any well-regulated state to bring a person to capital punishment, the innocence of whose life would not admit of a suspicion of the slightest offence. And even if he were to suffer, it was still less probable that he should suffer in a way of punishment, which the nation, to whom he was sent, could not inflict. Many steps, some intricacies, much contradiction, and a degree of perjury, was necessary to bring it to this. He was accused of blasphemy before one tribunal against the God he worshiped; of sedition at another, against the government to which he taught submission. The priest passed a sentence upon him which he could not execute; the prætor remonstrated against the iniquity of his sentence, yet put it in execution.



caution. It was not possible therefore that this part of his prophecy could be fulfilled without corruption in the supreme judge of one nation, without cowardice in that of another.

II. His disciples came as near to their Master in affliction as they did in innocence. Every part of the world in which they appeared was made richer by their blood. Their own accounts, plain, simple, and undisguised as they are, carry horror in them. Their treatment from their countrymen was bad; as they increased and were dispersed among the nations, their reception was no better. They were banished by one emperor, they were butchered by another. Insult was added to inhumanity. They were blackened with odious names, to excite and keep up the popular hatred. As they were dressed in the skins of beasts, to expose them to the fury of dogs; so they were represented in the characters of beasts, to expose them to the resentments of men. Moderate punishments were inflicted on the more venial crimes of theft, adultery, murder. The invention was racked to find out one adequate  
to

to the unpardonable guilt of piety and innocence. The holy religion of Jesus was treated as an execrable superstition, and the name of Christian included every thing that could be said or conceived ill of human nature. So literally were they hated of all men "for his name's sake!" If in this life only they had had hope in Christ, they had sure been of all men most miserable. But a nobler expectation fired their breasts, and raised their thoughts to look down upon things the most shocking to human nature, tortures and death. They even sought their punishments with as much assiduity as others would have declined them. Ambitious of martyrdom, and prodigal of their blood, they were only afraid of escaping torment. They congratulated themselves and each other in being thought worthy to follow the steps of the great Captain of their salvation, who was himself made perfect by suffering; imploring mercy from heaven on their murderers, and praying with their last breath that their blood might not be laid to the charge of those who shed it. This was the amiable aspect of that persecuted church!

lovely



lovely in her sorrows, and superior to her afflictions.

III. But when she had tired her persecutors by patience, and her virtues had broke through the cloud of her adversity; when kings became her protectors, the scene was not more changed in her circumstances than in her manners. She no sooner became possessed of the earth than she expressed less solicitude about the kingdom of heaven. Those virtues, which had flourished in the shade, were oppressed and faded in too warm a sun. Charity, the very soul and spirit of the Christian faith, was too soon lost in a thousand ridiculous questions, which were not of the essence of religion, and could be of no other use but to perplex, and, in the end, supplant it. Who, for instance, that had any tolerable notion of the true liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, would have had the least idea of recurring to the beggarly elements of the Mosaic ordinances, and of embarrassing the pure, and perpetual, and universal religion of Jesus Christ with that servile, and temporary, and local ritual! One cannot recollect without horror the immoral

moral principles which flowed from an impure fountain, and polluted too early the Christian church. Could any man suppose that persons devoted to the happy hope of the glorious appearance of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, could break into divisions about the time of celebrating the anniversary of his resurrection? Is it credible that men swallowed up, as one should suppose, in gratitude for the inexpressible condescension of Divine love, should, with bold impiety, be subdividing his nature, and defining his essence, instead of the more acceptable as well as more reasonable service of conforming themselves to his will? to decide peremptorily, and excommunicate each other for not subscribing implicitly to each side of a question, on a subject which the angels are desirous to stoop down barely to contemplate? How often might a pious Christian read over the whole gospel with devotion, without ever dreaming of the saints reigning a thousand years upon the earth? What dying man ever reproved himself, for not having properly settled the point concerning the baptizing of heretics,



or the Virgin-mother? How honestly may a good man endeavour to do what he can, without ever deciding upon original sin, or wandering through the subtle mazes of liberty and necessity? From what lesson of scripture could one learn either to worship an idol, or to pursue with an anathema one who thinks his imagination may be helped by looking upon a picture or a statue? What a spirit of Christian love must inspire the world, when the whole Eastern and Western churches became more distant in opinion than they were in situation, upon the admission of a single word into their creed.

Can Charity itself cover the multitude of sins in that strange constitution, the church of Rome, which is so visibly opposite, both in doctrine and practice, to every thing that Christianity, or even reason, enjoins or could intend? Whoever can convince himself of the propriety of prohibiting marriage to one set of men; of concealing the scriptures in a tongue not understood by another; of a place separated for the purgation of souls, and the church's receiving the price of their purgation;

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purgation; of the bodily presence of God (if I may so say) in the commemoration of our blessed Saviour's passion; of a priest assuming the Divine attribute of being incapable of error; and of the apostolic see supreme even to the deposition of kings and subversion of states; must ground his opinions on other authorities than any which I can find in the social and peaceable gospel of Jesus Christ.

If these opinions were considered as speculations merely, they might excite our compassion: when we reflect upon the blood that has been shed in support of such crude and subtle and unreasonable as well as unchristian tenets, it excites at the same time our horror and our indignation. Blessed be that era, from whatever motive it might arise at first, by whatever means it was at last effected, whose happy light dispelled these phantoms! It was a happiness ardently to be wished before it was had, to be gratefully acknowledged afterwards, to escape from that dungeon, even though all our fetters were not quite shook off; for it will not be said that the Reformation, acceptable as it was, put an end to all that was wild and visionary or  
cruel



cruel in religion. Must we not confess with shame, what we cannot deny with truth, that it was productive of as much folly as that church from which it was divorced, and of as much barbarity as that of which it had complained? So easy is the transition from one extreme to the other; so common is it, even in religion, to know no bound to one's fancy but one's power, and to plead for mercy till we are grown strong enough to refuse it. This was but too sadly verified in the times we now commemorate, when a zeal without knowledge in the Reformed, falling in with an unhappy ferment in the state, bore down the best disciplined church and the best modeled civil government in the world in one common ruin, and brought a Prince to the scaffold, who, under the influence of other maxims, examples, and alliances, and in a time when the rights of the crown and of the people had been better understood, would have been an ornament to a throne.

So near was the alliance here between Church and State. They were inseparably united. They went hand in hand. They flourished and fell together. "They were lovely in

Q

"their

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“ their lives, and in their deaths they could  
“ not be divided.”

Let me not incur the displeasure of the friends of Liberty, if, while I feel with them for the grievances of my country, I reserve one sigh for the hard fate of the King, who seemed desirous to have them redressed. It may happen, that in the too warm pursuit of freedom, the advocates for it may be carried violently over the fences of equity and humanity.

It makes little difference, I confess, *for the present*, to a people who labour under the weight of oppression, whether their hardships arise from the *temper*, or from the *error* of the Prince; but in the prospect the difference is considerable. A mistake may be easily set right; it may be a much more difficult task to alter a disposition. Yet how far even the inconveniences arising from the latter might have been prevented by gentler methods than that of blood; let that happy period of our constitution testify, when the liberties of the people, like a bone well set, became the stronger for having been broken; when, by the temper and good conduct of a legal Parliament, made wiser by the miscarriages which had preceded, and equally sen-

sible



fible of the unhappiness that must attend upon either extreme in Church and State, the rights of the people were effectually secured, without overturning the state of the Church, or sacrificing the life of the King. A settlement at which Religion does not blush, while at the same time Liberty had in it the completest triumph.

As it is the Birth-right of the meanest subject in this realm to receive his sentence from his *equals*, one would have hoped, that the first person in the State might have been indulged with something more like the same privilege than, I suppose, any man, whatever his political principles may be, will pretend those judges to have been. There is something so very particularly difficult in the case of Kings, that any miscarriage of them seems to deserve a very particular compassion. It is a doctrine as rational as it is Christian, to pity, as well as pray for, Kings and all that are in authority; and when one recollects the long process of this Monarch's afflictions, and his execrable murder, it is impossible for any man to approve, who would not himself have been an accessory to it. Let those avow that

who can justify it. A man must have lost what distinguishes him from a savage, who does not feel some sensible emotions, when he figures to himself insulted Royalty in that affecting portrait,

" When dust was cast upon that sacred head,  
 " Which with such gentle sorrow he shook off,  
 " His face still combating 'twixt tears and smiles,  
 " That had not heav'n, for some strong purpose,  
     " steel'd                                 [melted,  
 " The hearts of men, they must perforce have  
 " And Barbarism itself have pitied him!"

But while we compassionate the King, we cannot be unconcerned for the Commonwealth. We may look upon the first efforts of Patriotism in these distracted times like the gushing out of a clear stream from a wholesome spring, which, too soon meeting with troubled waters, lost its purity, and its virtue, and was hurried on with dirt, and noise, and violence, to the destruction of every thing that opposed it. But it is uncomfortable treading on this deceitful ground, where ashes just cover the heat, which, on the least motion, are ready to break out into a flame; and as it is not the business of a Christian preacher to vindicate one side at the expence of the other, nor to be of any party, where perhaps



perhaps no good man can fairly keep pace throughout with either, it suffices to my purpose, and to the occasion, to have included this amongst those instances in which religion, the Christian religion, real or pretended, has had its share in the divisions: and when we consider the complaints on all hands, the real hardships sustained, and the number of lives lost, from the opening to the closing of these intestine wounds, I fancy this period will make no inconsiderable figure amongst those particulars, from the induction of which we see a completion of this prophecy! Give me leave to make a short reflection or two, and I have done.

I. We have seen how minutely this prophecy has been fulfilled in the various calamities which befel the Church of Christ. Let us first take shame to ourselves, *as men*, that our common human nature should ever have been so totally warped from the rule of right, as to have been capable of treating the very best of their species, the preachers of righteousness, the messengers of heaven, as wretches too wicked to live; and of accounting those persons as not worthy of a place in the world of whom the world was not worthy.

Q 3

But

But though this reflection falls upon our nature, our faith incurs no censure. Christianity flourished while her professors suffered; and if the Church was persecuted, the religion triumphed!

2. Not so in the dissensions between Christians themselves. Here the reproof falls heavier on us. The institution of Jesus received a deeper wound from its friends than it was in the power of all its adversaries to give it. To persons who judge of a rule by the practice of those who refer to it, the religion suffered on account of the weaknesses of its nominal votaries; and the gospel itself, like the Author of it, was condemned to suffer for iniquities that were *not its own*.

3. The reproach will come still nearer home to us, as members of a Reformed Church. What can we, who have protested against the tyranny of one Church, say for ourselves, if we relapse into the errors we have so justly condemned in others.

4. When we look calmly back upon these dissensions, and see how little foundation most of them had in the doctrines, how  
little



little justification any of them can receive from the precepts of the gospel; let us learn how much more the ends of Providence, in its religious dispensations, are answered by a *Christian temper*, than by any thing else which we may fancy better: let us learn to distinguish carefully between what is indifferent in Christianity and what is essential to it; and how solicitous soever we may be about the latter, let us leave the former to be contended for by those whose devotion lies more in their imagination than in their judgement. When we take our stand at any period, and upon any subject of religious discord, we may fairly put this question to any of the parties,

“ — DIINE hunc ARDOREM mentibus addunt?

“ — An sua cuique DEUS sit DIRA CUPIDO?”

VIRG. Æn. lib. ix.

5. Let us remember that though offences of this kind must needs come, yet a woe is denounced upon him by whom the offence shall come. And as this prophecy has been but too fully verified on one side, let us endeavour to be the happy instruments in accomplishing that other part of the description

Q 4

given

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given by the prophets of the Messiah's kingdom, when every beast of prey, and every religious sect, more fierce than any of them, shall remit of their ferocity, "when they shall not kill nor hurt, in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord of hosts!"

6. To conclude. Let the idle prejudices in religion, and the indeterminate rights of state, which we have been surveying, teach us to admire, and set a proper value upon, the rare felicity of our own times, when a happy moderation of opinion in one, and a gentle exercise of acknowledged power in the other, open a pleasing prospect of entire harmony in both. And, as an effectual security against any similar crisis of our constitution, we see a Monarch on the throne, whose personal virtues have all the additional aids of inheritance, of education, of example, of domestic connexion, to lead him by the hand to a paternal love for his people, and to engage the willing allegiance of a grateful country.

SERMON



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S E R M O N X.

*True Religion a reasonable Service.*

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MICH. vii. 6, 7, 8.

*Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and  
bow myself before the high God? shall I  
come before him with burnt-offerings, with  
calves of a year old?*

*Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of  
rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil?  
shall I give my first-born for my trans-  
gression, the fruit of my body for the sin  
of my soul?*

*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good;  
and what doth the Lord require of thee,  
but—to do justly, and to love mercy, and  
to walk humbly with thy God?*

**I**T is related in the life of a great heathen  
philosopher, that over the entrance into  
his school there was this inscription, “ Let  
“ no one enter into this place who has not  
“ some

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“some notion of Geometry;” intimating, no doubt, the very close connexion between a habit of geometrical reasoning, and any tolerable progress in philosophy; so close, indeed, that whoever discovers a want of taste for the first, affords but little reason to expect that he will ever become any great proficient in the other.

For the same reason, and with equal propriety, the teachers of religion, the Christian religion, may inscribe on the porch of every temple, “Let no one enter into this place “who has not some tincture of Virtue.” For virtue is essentially, and therefore inseparably, connected with religion. It is not possible, that a vitiated mind should have any proper relish for Divine truth. The understanding of a bad man is retained on the other side; his affections are immersed in other objects, which, by degrees, create in him a settled aversion to, and in the end beget in him an utter incapacity for, nobler views.

This is universally, in some degree, the miserable state of the sensual man; in proportion always to the progress of his corruption; till every inclination and disposition  
of



of his heart become, as it is strongly expressed, an act of hostility against God; till he is as remote from all possible communication with the Divine nature, as he is from any shadow of resemblance to it. We are assured, from the same authority, that the mind, which is under the dominion of sense, not only is not subject, but is not capable of being reduced to a subjection, to the law of God. And, indeed, our experience confirms this decision of our religion. The animal man comprehendeth not the doctrines of the Divine spirit. His optics are adapted to the inspection of more minute objects. It is for the pure in heart alone that those blessed visions are reserved.

It is to little purpose that you throw your pearls before him, who can delight himself better in the dirt: it is but lost labour that you unfold the gates of Heaven, to one whose eyes and whose expectations are raised no higher than the earth.

We may observe a difference between the virtuous and the wicked, on subjects of religion, not unlike that by which, the historian tells us, God was pleased to distinguish his people from their adversaries in some of their  
first

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first conflicts: “there was a thick darkness  
“in all the land of Egypt, even a darkness  
“which might be felt; but all the children  
“of Israel had light in their dwellings.”

And there is a strong and an insuperable reason in nature for this evident distinction between good and bad men in enquiries of religion, which is plainly this, That every advance in celestial truth opens a prospect the most inviting to the virtuous, while the vitious man trembles at every ray of light \* which is let in upon his disordered mind; and, like the Israelites of old, can discern nothing in the land of promise but the children of Anak;

Nor is this observation in the least inconsistent with the terms of that comprehensive system of reconciliation, which opens its arms wide to embrace every thing that discovers any the least inclination to come in; nay, which compels (as far as the free mind can be compelled by hope or fear, by rational argument or Divine influence) even the reluctant and averse. That healing dispen-

\* “Trepidant que immisso lumine manes.”

VIRG. *Æn.* de Caco.



sation, the Author of which came to call "finners to repentance;" for repentance has a very near affinity to virtue, proportionate always to the sincerity and intenseness of it; and whatever indulgence that institution may extend to the tender and relenting, it still holds out the most awful terrors to the obstinate and perverse.

Whenever, then, we are desirous of pursuing this most important of all enquiries concerning the terms of our acceptance with God, let us prepare our minds carefully for the great research, let us suspend at least, for the time, every inveterate habit of vice, let us shake off every rising propensity to evil; for the place whereon we stand is holy ground.

And may that pure Spirit of truth, which alone is able to guide us into all truth, assist our conceptions, while we examine, with humility and religious deference, wherewith we shall come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the most high God!

This, one may naturally suppose, will be one of the first questions that a rational and thinking being should put to himself, whenever, and by whatever means, he is brought  
to

to consider his own frail nature, and the innumerable contingences which attend it, to be under the direction of a Governor infinitely powerful. Who would not think himself happily employed in searching out the best method of recommending himself to the protection of infinite Power, that he might rest in safety under the shadow of his wings !

But rude and imperfect, nay gross and barbarous, must that man's idea of the Deity be, who can presume, that the friendship of God is to be purchased by any part of that world, which, being originally the work of his hand, must be ever under the controul of his will. As an object of adoration, or of abhorrence, must he conceive of that Power, who is capable of being pacified with the unnatural, and therefore impious, sacrifice of his offspring; and, what must of course attend such a sacrifice, even of his humanity !

We must not, therefore, allow ourselves to be hurried along down the stream of commentators, who have too generally, if not universally, ascribed this inquiry to the character



rafter of a Jew, or of the whole people of the Jews, who had been taught, before the time of this prophecy, by fatal example, in their own history, that divine as well as moral lesson, that “to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” Who could not but have read likewise expressly in their law, and by implication also have learnt from the description contained in the sacred writings of their God, that the cruel rites of Moloch were “an abomination to the Lord,” who desires to be recommended to the affections of his creatures by no other character than his having a tenderness for his people equal to that with which “a father pitieth his own children.”

It seems more natural, as has of late been happily conjectured, to put this address into the mouth of the king of Moab, in conversation with the prophet, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. The king, measuring the attributes of the God from the disposition of his minister, bids largely for his favour, and, according to the horrid usage  
of

of his own country, supposes that the ends of religion might be answered by renouncing the best affections of his nature.

The ends of religion, he meant, as far only as local and temporal protection is concerned. This was the immediate care of the Moabite. The grand issue of piety was no object of his consideration. Success against a numerous and victorious enemy engrossed all his thoughts. For this purpose he had recourse to the God of Israel, whose aid he endeavours to engage by a profusion of offerings in every kind of his substance, or even, if all these should fail, with the life of his son.

But though the application was such as had no tincture of devotion in it, and the means such as were only to be expected from an idolater, and the grossest of his kind, yet the answer is such as well suited a representative of the Creator of the universe; and one whose conduct should have been more conformable to his commission: "He  
 " hath shewed thee, O man, what is good!  
 " and what doth the Lord require of thee,  
 " but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to  
 " walk humbly with thy God!"

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“ He hath shewed thee, O man, what is “good!” Now whatever answers entirely the end for which it was made is said, in the scriptures of the Old Testament particularly, to be *good*. Instances of this are obvious even on the first opening of the books of Moses, where the Creator, upon his original formation of the animal and inanimate world, is said, as it were upon a review, “ to have “seen that they were *good*!” that is, that each in its station corresponded minutely with the respective end for which it was ordained. And that must be good indeed (for what can we conceive to be relatively better than that?) which serves admirably the purpose for which it was designed by infinite wisdom? a wisdom sufficiently to be seen, never enough to be admired and adored in these lower scenes of nature, which are laid open to our observation.

The sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, the sea, the air, with the wonderful effects of their various combinations, light and darkness, heat and cold, and the successive seasons, retreat and return in a constant vicissitude, promoting the ends of their different appoint-

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ments, in conformity to “ a law which hath  
 “ not been broken ;” and all this with such  
 seeming alacrity as if they *rejoiced indeed* to  
 run their courses, and at the same time with  
 such precision as if in reality they “ *knew*  
 “ the periods of their going down.”

Nor is there, to pass over the inexhausti-  
 ble volumes of the vegetative world, a less  
 harmonious contrast visible in the numerous  
 classes of animal life, which, with various  
 sounds of joy, express one common thankf-  
 giving to the Author of their being, while  
 they pursue each its distinct operation, by a  
 diversity of instruments and materials, direct-  
 ed, as it were, by a clue, which leads more  
 certainly to its point than the utmost sagacity  
 of human reason.

Thus far *all is good*; while, through  
 the whole and in every part of each, the  
 wise designs of the great Architect are most  
 accurately accomplished with an undeviating  
 exactness.

But these are *necessary* acts. To man  
 alone is reserved the happy privilege of  
 dedicating *voluntarily* his powers to the ends  
 for which they were at first bestowed. This  
*is good for man.*

It



It is naturally to be expected of him, upon whom the dominion of this world and the reversion of the next is conferred, that he should regulate his conduct by the laws of nature and of God. This is his rational worship. For this reason alone he seems to have been exempt from the strong necessity to which the rest of the creation was made subject, that he might present his heart "a free will offering" to the Lord his God. Obedience, arising from any other cause than moral motives, would be the motion of a stone, not the duty of a man, and consequently incapable of being in any sense acceptable to God more than the rising vapour, or the falling dew. The submission of the will to the dictates of reason and Divine command, is the foundation of all the preference which falls to his lot, and which alone makes him of more value than many other of his fellow creatures, in some other respects not inferior to himself.

And *this is all* that the Lord requires of him! Oh! comfortable declaration! which, like a ray from heaven, discovers at once, to all men, both its origin and its end! and as the light, which long afterwards di-

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rected the steps of the Eastern sages, hovers over the place where our salvation lies.

It is most natural (and even obvious now) to presume, that, if the Author of our being were the delineator of our religion too, the precepts of the latter must be accommodated to the constitution of the former; because, short-sighted and ignorant as we are, we may yet (without breaking in upon the reverence which should ever accompany our reasonings on the Divine proceedings) venture to affirm, that infinite wisdom can never counteract its own designs. But to have given to man a *frame*, in which virtue experimentally leads to happiness, and at the same time to give him a *rule* which leads him to seek for it by other means, is the most glaring of all absurdities. It is most reasonable, therefore, I repeat it, to suppose, that if ever the Creator of the world should vouchsafe to make any discovery of his intention relative to the conduct of man, the tables of Revelation must contain a transcript of the laws of Nature. And what we might thus fairly conclude, we happily experience—"He hath (not only) shewed thee, O man! what is good! but the  
" Lord



“ Lord thy God requires *nothing else* of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.”.

This is the sum and great out-line, as one may say, of the whole duty of man. To preserve a solicitous attention to God’s supreme direction, under a rational conviction of his paternal care; an equitable regard to the rights and interests of our brethren, his children; with a sensible concern for their infirmities and wants, a concern which must reach out its hand beyond the line of rigid justice.

These offices are generally ranged, by moralists, under *three* different branches, as they relate to God, to mankind, and to the individual; which differs from the method here observed, where the second division is subdivided, and the third omitted; but though it be omitted in the letter, whoever considers attentively, will find it to be sufficiently provided for in the intention. For the very notion of “ walking with,” or in the presence of, “ God,” is an universal motive to caution in personal conduct; and a true compassion to others, must, in very obvious instances, restrain many criminal

excesses in ourselves; so that the fear of God, and a good-will to men, are placed on either side, as guardians, shall I say? or as supporters, of personal virtue!

And, indeed, the decalogue, which undoubtedly contains the fullest notion of moral government, is itself divided only into two tables; and the substance of it, as explained by one who understood best of all men how to extract the spirit of the Divine laws, is comprehended precisely in the very same number.

This, then, however contracted or enlarged, this is the law of *man*; and this law is properly eternal and immutable, which is not so of any accidental or accessional appendages to religion.

For whether there have been shadows, they have vanished; whether there have been ceremonies, they are abolished; or if there have been sacrifices, they have ceased to be offered: but no day shall ever silence the demands of justice; the longest date of time shall draw still closer the obligations to mercy; eternity itself shall hardly suffice to

express



express the obedient homage of grateful piety.

Nothing can give greater force to this truth than its coming from the mouth of prophets, themselves subject to a dispensation which abounded in rites and services of institution; in which, notwithstanding, God himself is frequently introduced, declaring his abhorrence of the most solemn celebrations, when destitute of obedience; the only principle from which they could derive any imaginable pretence of being acceptable sacrifices to him; nay, which he seems to avow, were at first ordained by him as statutes which were *not good* in themselves, but such only as the state of the then world, and the constitution of that people would admit. As the vehicle is often more in quantity than the medicine which it conveys, adapted, according to the skill of him who prescribes, to the age and disposition of the person for whom it is intended. And the matter is repeatedly represented in this light by that apostle, who was a disciple of one of the greatest masters of a sect more exact

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than any other in the knowledge of that form of worship.

At one time he considers the Mosaic ceremony as the very infant state of religion: "When I was a child," that is, under the ceremonial, my conversation, my conceptions, and my actions, were such as might be expected from a child; "but when I became a man," that is, capable of a reasonable service, I laid aside the manners of my infancy.

At another time he describes the same law as a school-master, or rather (by which his idea may be better expressed) as a director or guide of children, to lead them gradually to the observance of a more perfect lesson; where when they were arrived, the steps by which they ascended might be thrown aside.

And again, "as milk, the food of babes," incapable as yet of receiving a more intellectual law.

But a greater than the apostle, even the Master himself, did prophecy, that the time was coming, when the Father of the world would no longer be worshiped at Jerusalem,



lem, that is, with ceremonies and sacrifice; for, being a spirit, he could accept only a spiritual worship, and that he sought such devotion barely as consisted in inward sanctity, and actual service; corresponding entirely with the declaration with which we at first set out, that the Lord *seeks*, as it is here, or *requires* of us, as it is there, nothing else “but to do justly, and to love mercy, and “to walk humbly with our God.”

And if this law were once as punctually observed as it is often plainly promulged, we should then have the same harmony in the *moral*, as has always been in the *natural* world; where all things continue, from their first projection to this day, to proceed according to God's ordinances; and all men, as well as all other parts of nature, would be his servants: then *all would be good*, as in their first creation.

It was probably the strong idea of this *universal concert*, which raised the flight of the Divine Lyric poet, from the material to the intellectual world, in that rapturous ode, “The heavens declare the glory of “God, and the firmament sheweth his “handy work. Without speech their dis-  
“course

“course is heard, as if they conversed together. In them hath he set the sun, and his heat pervadeth all things.”

From this height he ascends above the planetary circles to the invisable world: “The doctrine of the Lord is undefiled, and restoreth life. It giveth light. It rejoices the heart.” As if he had said, “As the power and wisdom of God is eminently displayed in the arrangement of the planetary orbs, who receive their light and heat from that great eye and soul of this lower world, the sun; so is his goodness not less visible, in conveying life and energy to all orders of intelligent beings, by their steadfast adherence to another law!”

And as in the system of nature (to carry on the allusion one step further) the sun, though *fixed*, dispenses its influence to every planet, in proportion as it is by *its own* motion and situation disposed to receive it;

So is it in the moral world; in which that universal spirit, *in whom is no variable-ness nor shadow of change*, diffuses its virtue to every individual in the innumerable orders of intellectual beings, as each of them is, by *its own* voluntary inclination, *prepared* to admit it.



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By this means, or in some such manner as this, it may be conceived, that the good spirit of God pervades all things; all things, I mean, that lie within the *sphere* prescribed for its communication; unrestrained, uncircumscribed by any bound, unless it be by the impenetrable insensibility of an undiscerning and unreprieving mind.

To guard us from this last deplorable state of moral indisposition, let us devoutly join in that concluding petition of the psalmist, "Let  
" the words of my mouth, and the meditation  
" of my heart, be always acceptable in thy  
" sight (so they will always be when they  
" are conformable to thy law), O Lord, my  
" strength, and my redeemer!"

SERMON

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S E R M O N XI.

CHUBB'S *Case of ABRAHAM examined  
and exploded.*

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MICH. vii. 6, 7, 8.

*Wherewith shall I come before the Lord and  
bow myself before the high God? shall I  
come before him with burnt-offerings, with  
calves of a year old?*

*Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of  
rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil?  
shall I give my first-born for my trans-  
gression, the fruit of my body for the sin  
of my soul?*

*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good;  
and what doth the Lord require of thee,  
but—to do justly, and to love mercy, and  
to walk humbly with thy God?*

WE have before seen, that the religion  
of men, as one might reasonably sup-  
pose it would be, is in fact such as is conform-  
able to, and perfectly consistent with, the  
constitution and circumstances of man; and  
that



that the rule of action, which God has been pleased to communicate expressly to mankind, as a measure of their conduct towards him and their fellow creatures, is not, in its general view and purpose, contradictory to that rule which he had originally written so legibly in their nature and relations.

I should now have proceeded to enquire, how far a man may safely depend upon his acceptance with God, in regard to his final happiness, upon the observance which he does in reality pay to this rule, whether expressed or understood.

But as some proceedings, which are ascribed to God in the books which we confess to be of Divine original, have been represented by some men in lights which are unfavourable to this account of religion, and either totally subversive of the account or of the authenticity of those books, wherein the histories which seem to contradict it are recorded, particularly in the relation given by Moses of that memorable transaction between the God of Israel and the patriarch Abraham, with respect to offering up his son Isaac, I conceive it to be not improper

improper in this place (as the giving a man's first born for his transgression, the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul, is implicitly discarded amongst the other offers of ceremonial service) to review this part of that ancient record; to see if we may not be able, by the force of plain reason and undoubted matter of fact, to wrest the characters of Moses, of Abraham, and of God himself, from the strong gripe of one of the apostles of what is called, by courtesy of this country, Deism; and, as it should seem, by his undefatigable zeal and repeated labours, one of the chiefest of those apostles.

And as I would myself most heartily dissent, and exhort you most earnestly to do so, from every pretence of religion that should stand in need of any art to support it; so I will use no other in defence of this cause, but barely to range the materials in such order, as may throw the clearest and the fullest light upon the whole transaction; being thoroughly sensible that there can not be a greater contradiction, than for a worshiper of the true God to enter upon  
his



his vindication, by the least appearance of a falsehood.

The method I propose to pursue in this argument shall be, to give you the author's doubts, reasons, reflexions, or whatever he, or any friend of his, may please to style them, fairly and fully in his own words. To every single step as we advance (to relieve your memory and assist your judgment) I shall subjoin an answer, which shall contain nothing but the simplest, the strictest, and, as it appears to me, the most religious truth.

In the conclusion, if the time will allow, I shall present a true state of the case, as it shall result from the matter as it arises; from whence, I am persuaded, it will appear to conviction, that the command, which was given by God to Abraham, is every way consistent with the most perfect goodness in him who gave; with the truest good of him to whom, and of him with regard to whom it was given; and, of course, that the veracity of Moses, in this relation, stands clear and unimpeached, notwithstanding the exceptions,

ceptions, objections, insinuations, sneers, and sophisms, of this arch-apostle!

He sets out with more modesty than we may chance to meet with in the sequel, it is pity therefore it should be lost, and says, "As to the case of Abraham, I think, with submission, that the thing commanded was morally unfit; and that God gave the command, not with an intent that it should be obeyed, but that he might take occasion from it to shew to Abraham, and his posterity, the unsuitness of all human sacrifices. And that this was the case," he thinks, "is evident from the event. For as the command was given to Abraham to be a tryal of his integrity, so, when that end was answered, then God recalled the command, and thereby testified his dislike, and shewed the unsuitness of all such practices."

These are the words of the author, without the least variation; in which we have not only his opinion, but the reason, ground, or proof of it. His sentiment is plainly, that the thing commanded was morally unfit; and that it was so in fact he thinks evident

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dent from the event ; or, because the command was recalled.

With equal submission, I think directly otherwise ; and the reason why I think so is neither more nor less than this : that a God absolutely wise and good (as this gentleman professedly believes God to be) can no more excite in a man's mind a resolution of doing what is morally unfit, than he can urge him to do it ; because the very seat of all morality lies in the heart, and in the intention ; and whatever God intended, Abraham, I make no doubt, at the instigation of God, did intend to offer up his son. This intention was as morally unfit in itself, as the action, if it had been carried into action, could possibly have been. From whence I conclude, that God could no more give a command, which should awaken such a *design* in Abraham, than he could suffer it to be executed by Abraham.

One may go farther, and say, that recalling a command affords no shadow of a proof that the thing commanded was morally unfit. The objector has already suggested a fair presumption in this case, that the command was not recalled upon that account, as

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he has allowed that the end of it was otherwise answered; and when the end of any command is confessedly answered, there cannot, evidently, be any necessity for having recourse to any other reason, as a cause for recalling it.

And apparently, if the moral unfitness of the thing in itself was the reason for repealing the command, it was a much stronger reason why it should never have been given. But the repealing of any law suggests, as I said, no kind of a presumption that that law contains any thing morally unfit in itself.

Who will venture to say, that all the laws, which have been repealed, in our own or any other country, were morally unfit at the time they were enacted? There are laws properly occasional, which, owing their very existence to some particular circumstance, lose, of course, their weight as that circumstance ceases. But let us look back to the ancient records of God's dealings with mankind. When God commanded the destruction of Niniveh to be absolutely denounced, and was afterwards pleased to retract that denunciation, will any man say, that the repeal of that command shewed the  
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moral unfitness of the thing commanded? or that it was morally unfit for the Governor of the universe to bring destruction upon a wicked city?

We may observe farther, that the very same reason is assigned by this writer, for God's giving the command, and for his repealing it, namely, "to shew the unfitness of all human sacrifices\*;" when he says, first, "that the command was not given with an intent that it should be obeyed, but—to shew to Abraham, and all his posterity, the unfitness of all human sacrifices." And again, "that when the end was answered, then God repealed the command, and thereby testified his dislike, and shewed the unfitness of all such practices†."

But it seems to me to be clear to a demonstration, that the reason which he gives, could neither be a reason for giving, nor a reason for repealing, the command; much less could it be a reason for both.

With respect to the first: if Abraham be supposed to be a stranger as yet to this piece of intelligence, "that human sacrifices were unfit," he could make no objection to the

\* Chubb's Tracts, 4to. page 227.

† *Ib.*

Divinity of the command upon that account, which is the Deists only argument against it.

Beside, Abraham, it is evident, must be the last man in the world to whom such a lesson could, with any propriety, be directed; as he had but one son, the son of his age, and of his hope too; in whom every expectation he had entertained must centre, or cease; on whom, of course, his affection must have been so strongly riveted, that the very appearance of losing him was the string upon which his heart, otherwise impregnable, could be most sensibly touched.

Therefore, if God's intent in this command was to teach Abraham "a dislike to human sacrifices," he was taking an infinite deal of pains to guard Abraham against a crime to which he neither had, nor could possibly have, the least temptation.

But let me ask, Is it not a new, and a strange, and an unaccountable way of proceeding, to command any thing to be done, in order to shew the unfitness of doing it? That God could conduct things in this manner, must be an article of faith peculiar, I presume, to the creed of a Deist. No plain Christian, I am persuaded, could ever dream,



that God could command a human sacrifice, to shew the unfitness of all human sacrifices? If this be so, he certainly could never be the author of the decalogue, which must, according to this new model of moral government, have consisted of as many commands as it now does of prohibitions. A most extraordinary method this, one should think, of making laws, by which murder, adultery, theft, perjury, should be most expressly commanded, in order to shew the moral unfitness of these several acts to the age in which the laws were promulged, and to future ages!

From hence I infer, that God did not give the command to Abraham, as is alledged, to shew to Abraham, and his posterity, “the absolute unfitness of all human sacrifices.”

Neither could God’s recalling the command be intended to shew Abraham the unfitness of all such practices, because forbidding them by a law would have been a more likely method to shew the unfitness of them, than to command them first, and afterwards recal the command; and again, because the end of the command being answered, was an evident and a sufficient reason for recalling

the command. And it may as well be said, that God recalled his command for the destruction of Niniveh, to shew the unfitness of destroying a wicked city, as that he recalled his command to Abraham, to shew “the unfitness of human sacrifices.”

Having thus fully shewn, that to evince “the unfitness of human sacrifices” was not, nor in any light could be, a reason either for God’s giving this command, or for his recalling it separately; you will not expect from me, that I should take much pains to shew, that it could not be a reason for both together.

I pass over the *tyranny*, the *weakness* and *vanity*, the *misapplication of power to childish or hurtful purposes*, the *arbitrary* and *disagreeable conduct*, with which the God of Israel stands charged in the next paragraph, for breaking through a rule which this author has prescribed for his operations, and by that means reflecting dishonour upon his laws, as having no other foundation than (to use the author’s own expression, in which I know not whether the modesty, or the piety, or the truth, is most to be admired)

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Moses  
sentm  
base fl



mired) "the gratification of an humourist."

I transcribe what follows:

"If Abraham had sacrificed his son in obedience to the Divine command; in such a case, though the simplicity, the honesty, and integrity, of Abraham would have been commendable, yet the action itself would have been abominable both in the eyes of God and man\*." *Horresco referens!* I begin to shudder as I repeat it. Here nonsense and contradiction are pardonable figures! The blasphemy, with which this period is impregnated, requires a tenderness equal to that of the God, whom he insults and defames, to forgive.

It is absolute nonsense to say, that a man is to be commended and abhorred, in regard to the same action; it is downright blasphemy to assert, that a God, "who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," could ever command what is abominable in his own eyes.

The evil disposition, which he ascribes to the Deity, as represented in the books of Moses; his delight in barbarity, or his resentment being removed by it, is of the same base stamp.

\* lb. p. 228.

As to the guilt of all this, let me pass no other sentence than that which was once passed by a higher Being upon as keen a disputant, "The Lord rebuke him!" As to the falsehood of it, it is the business of this inquiry to detect and expose it.

What we have already gone through is barely a skirmish, a prelude to the main attack: his principal battery is not yet unmasked. He compleats his argument as follows\*: "Abraham stood to Isaac in the relation of a father; that is, he voluntarily became the instrument of bringing Isaac into being, and from hence he became naturally obliged to guard and protect that life. For as life to Isaac was a natural good, so it must be right and fit that he especially who introduced it should guard and secure that good to him whilst no circumstance attended his case which might any way render it fit that he should die. By natural obligation," he continues, "I mean fit and right in the nature of the thing;" which he conceives, for that reason to be independent on any Divine command. From whence he supposes it will unavoidably follow, "that no Divine command could

\* lb. p. 241.

"possibly



“possibly cancel the said natural obligation.”  
And if the Divine command could not make void the natural obligation which Abraham was under—then he thinks again, “that the  
“giving such a command with an intent that  
“it should be obeyed is wrong; and consequently that obedience to such a command  
“must be wrong also.”

This he takes to be a state of the case.

And upon this state of the case there will be no difficulty to decide, if we attend to his own argument, returned upon him, by barely putting, instead of the words “protecting the life of Isaac,” other words which in common acceptance are of equal import, “to guard Isaac from water and  
“fire”—the elements which are naturally supposed to be destructive of life.

And the reason of this change is purely to make it more easily intelligible, on a cursory hearing, than any other method of reply that occurs to me could possibly do.

You shall hear now how his argument will run, and what weight it will carry with it:

“Abraham, standing to Isaac in the relation of a father, became naturally obliged  
“to

“ to preserve his son from water and from  
 “ fire, as those elements are evidently de-  
 “ structive of life, which is a natural good;  
 “ it must be right and fit then that the parent  
 “ particularly should protect his son from  
 “ water and fire, either of which we know  
 “ must prove fatal to him, till some circum-  
 “ stance should attend his case which should  
 “ make it fit for Isaac to be committed to  
 “ one or other of these devouring elements.  
 “ And this obligation being antecedent to a  
 “ Divine command, no subsequent Divine  
 “ command can possibly cancel it.”

Now one plain question, grounded upon a well-attested matter of fact, will dissolve this Gordian knot.

Suppose a messenger from heaven, walking upon the sea, had said to Isaac—as he once did to Peter—“ Come!” or to Abraham, “ Send Isaac!” Would there not then be a circumstance attending Isaac’s case, that would make it fit for Abraham to entrust him with that treacherous element; and if he had expostulated, in the words of the author, “ that  
 “ the subsequent command of God could not  
 “ cancel his antecedent obligation to protect  
 “ Isaac from the water,” would not his absurdity



dity have deserved the same reproof at least which was given to Peter's apprehensions, "O! thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou *doubt*?"

It is plain then from fact, that a Divine command can set aside, make void, cancel, and destroy, an antecedent natural obligation, by taking away the very ground of the obligation. Such a command then cannot be wrong, nor will the obedience to it be wrong of course.

Again, as the two elements are equally under the Divine controul, "though Abraham  
" was under a natural obligation to protect  
" Isaac from the fire antecedent to the Divine  
" command, let us ask again, Suppose,  
" when Shadrac, Mesheck, and Abednego  
" were thrown into the fiery furnace, the  
" fourth person who walked in the form of  
" the Son of God unhurt in the midst had  
" called unto any father, and Abraham may  
" be supposed as well as any, to throw in his  
" son bound, will any man dare to say, that  
" it was not fit for God to give such a command,  
" nor for Abraham to trust his son in  
" virtue of that command in the fire, when  
" he

“ he was persuaded that he would come  
 “ forth as those men did, on whose bodies the  
 “ fire had no power, neither was a hair of  
 “ their head singed, nor their garments  
 “ changed, nor had even the smell of fire  
 “ passed on them !

“ And was the command given to Abra-  
 “ ham to offer up his son as a burnt offering  
 “ harder than this ? Or is the obligation to  
 “ obedience less, because we are not entirely  
 “ acquainted with the *reasons* of the Divine  
 “ command ?”

This will shew farther the folly of what he  
 asserts in another place, “ That where the  
 “ thing commanded has the *appearance* of  
 “ unfitness, but in reality is otherwise, every  
 “ wise and good governor will with the  
 “ command reveal the *reason* and shew the  
 “ *fitness* of it\*.” Now he supposes this fact  
 to be for the tryal of Abraham ; but if the  
 reason and fitness of the command had been  
 revealed to him, it could have been no tryal.  
 For if he had been told in so many words,  
 “ that Isaac was safe in the hands of God,  
 “ and should come unhurt out of the fire,  
 “ there could have been no great effect of  
 “ faith in Abraham to take God’s word for

\* Ib. p. 226.



“the truth of it.” But it was left to him to reconcile the difficulty; and he reasoned upon it, and he reasoned right, “that God “could raise him even from the dead.” In which process, he made not less a discovery of his judgement than of his obedience.

He proceeds, and adds, “That as life is a “natural good, as it renders us capable of “tasting those pleasures which the present “state of things has furnished us with; so “consequently death is a natural evil whilst “we are capable of those pleasures\*.” Upon these positions he twists a string of moral unfitnesses as before, till he comes to Abraham and to God.

Now we have already seen, from undoubted relations of fact, that the offering up of Isaac, by the direction and in the presence of God, does by no kind of necessity imply the death of Isaac; therefore any moral unfitness in that act, which is founded upon a supposition of loss of life to Isaac, is totally beside the question.

Upon one point he seems a little divided in his opinion: for at one time he is pleased to suppose “that God might possibly have “a right grounded in property to take the

\* *Ib.* p. 241.

“life of Isaac\* ;” but the very next moment he relapses again into another hot fit of infidelity on this head; and, having reflected that property in any subject does not lessen the natural obligation of the proprietor, he is now able to demonstrate “that if God  
 “had given being to a creature, and a con-  
 “stitution which might run out to the age  
 “of sixty years in a state of happiness, that  
 “it would be morally unfit for God to cut  
 “off that being in the midst of his days, as  
 “it would be barring him of thirty years  
 “felicity. And God’s property in that  
 “creature, he is convinced, does not alter  
 “the case at all.” This he calls “a case  
 “directly to the purpose of God’s demand-  
 “ing the life of Isaac †.”

But this is far from being a similar case; because, without deciding upon God’s property in the life of Isaac, God himself was under the strongest tie that we can conceive him to be under, even that of his own express promise, to preserve the life of Isaac. For, if God had cut off Isaac in the midst or before the midst of his days, what must have become of that solemn promise made by him

\* Ib. p. 242.

† Ib.



to Abraham, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called?"

So that cutting a creature off in the midst of his days cannot with any degree of truth be called a case directly to the purpose.

Besides, he takes that for granted which requires more proof than the whole fraternity of Deists will ever be able to produce, "that God's taking a man out of this life is depriving him of so many years felicity." To make this evident, it rests upon him to prove, either that death deprives us totally of perception, or that it involves us in a mode of existence less calculated to promote happiness than that in which we now exist. But there is as little philosophy or good sense in either of these suppositions as there is of religion; so far is there from any shadow of a proof of either of them!

One effort more, and he is exhausted. "Supposing," says he, "it be admitted, that God might, if he pleased, have taken away the life of Isaac—yet it was most unfit that he should do it by the hand of Abraham\*."

We have before agreed, that it is an undoubted prerogative of God's moral govern-

\* Ib. p. 243.

ment,

ment, to bring destruction upon a wicked city; as Niniveh, suppose, or Sodom. Let us suppose then that there had been as many innocent persons in Sodom, when God determined to destroy that city, as there were in Niniveh; and that Isaac had been one of that number. Suppose farther, that God had been pleased to appoint Abraham his messenger to call down fire upon Sodom. Isaac, in this case, would have died by the hand of Abraham, as much as he could do by being offered upon the altar.

Yet it will not be denied that what is perfectly fit for a moral governor to command, cannot be most unfit for any person under moral government to execute.

Thus I have endeavoured to untwist this golden chain of argument, which this bold adventurer has dared to fasten even to the throne of God. We have seen it link by link frittered into nothing, and all the airy fabric resolved into its first element.

As the author of this wretched sophistry is now no more, I should have dismissed his works on the first perusal, with a prayer that they might not follow him; but as I fear that "he, being dead, yet speaketh"

to



to many incautious, to some too willing to be deceived; I shall think myself happy, if this antidote may come time enough to prevent the spreading of the poison in any instance—and to inculcate this better lesson, “That any *seeming difficulty* in the Divine commands is no *just reason* for *withdrawing* our obedience—but that the obligation which binds most in nature, and stands foremost as most fit and right in all morality, is to *walk humbly with our God!*”

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S E R M O N XII.

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*Religion the great Security against  
the Delusions of Sin.*

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HEB. iii. 12, 13.

*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of  
you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing  
from the living God; but exhort one ano-  
ther daily, while it is called to-day, lest  
any of you be hardened, through the deceit-  
fulness of sin.*

**I**T is an old and just observation, “ that  
“ no man ever became completely wicked  
“ at once.” There is a necessary gradation  
in the attainments of vice, as well as in those  
of virtue. Application, habit, and experi-  
ence, are requisite, to make a person a con-  
summate master even in evil arts. A man  
cannot, without some time, some labour, and  
some difficulty, arrive at the infamous  
honour of being eminently bad.

The infinitely-good God, foreseeing the  
strong proclivity of human nature to evil,  
has



has placed certain obstructions in its way, as barriers to its progress in vice.

The consciousness of the deformity and depravity of sin, the fear of discovery, and the apprehension of future vengeance, are happy obstacles to the precipitate course of the sinner, and preserve him, against his will, from destruction. One cannot but look upon this as one of the most merciful dispensations of heaven, that it has rendered even our descent to evil difficult; and made it almost impossible for us to fall, unless we are determined to take pains to do it.

But, notwithstanding all the kind restraints of conscience, of shame, and the terrors of futurity, which Providence has mercifully opposed to the progress of sin, it does however make wonderful advances in the world; and whatever difficulties heaven has been pleased to interpose between men and their misery, they seem in general to be too unfortunately successful in surmounting them all.

They find out ingenious ways to deafen their ears to the friendly rebukes of conscience, to steel their faces against the sudden expressions of shame, and to harden their hearts

hearts against the fear of final retribution. Then it is, and not till then, that they can go on smoothly from one wickedness to another, till they have absolutely unlearned the practice, and excluded themselves from the rewards, of virtue.

Yet sure, it is matter of astonishment to think that men should be so much enemies to themselves; that they should so industriously, so artfully, contrive to secure their own ruin; which heaven had taken such wise, such endearing precautions to prevent.

The best reason that can be assigned for such unnatural conduct, indeed the only one I know, is that which is suggested by the apostle in the words before us, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you *an evil heart of unbelief*, in departing from the living God; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." As if he had said, "Be extremely cautious how you entertain any disposition to infidelity, which may induce you to quit your dependance upon the only Being that is able to support you, and expose you to every delusion of unruly passion, till your hearts become at last so hardened



“ as to be no longer susceptible of any impression of virtue or religion.”

The words (if this may be admitted as an explication of them) imply two assertions.—

First—A man cannot entirely abandon himself to the commission of evil, till he has absolutely excluded the apprehension of God from his thoughts; and farther,

Secondly—When this apprehension of the Deity is once suppressed, a man be led imperceptibly, by the delusive attraction of error, through each successive degree of impiety, till he arrive at last at a state of absolute insensibility and final impenitence.

I shall now attempt to illustrate and confirm the first of these propositions, namely, That a man cannot entirely abandon himself to the commission of evil, till he has absolutely excluded the apprehension of God from his thoughts.

It is natural for us to express a reverence towards superior characters. Even the men of looser manners do yet impose a willing restraint upon themselves, when they stand before the persons they honour. The rebel puts on a face of loyalty in the presence of his prince; the coward has not the courage

to fly in the sight of his general ; and where is that presumptuous wretch that would not gladly cast a veil over his offences, when he apprehends himself in the presence of that Being, “ who is of purer eyes than to behold “ iniquity.” The very apprehension of the presence of God must check the rise of every guilty thought, and keep every tendency to passion in awe.

It is not usual ever for bad minds to put their dark workings in execution till every eye be closed ; they tremble at the approach of day, and shun the light they hate, because their deeds are evil. And is it possible that they should shrink at the faint glimmerings of an imperfect light, that they should fly from the presence of a man fallible as themselves, and yet dare to stand the inspection of that Eye, to which the very darkness is no darkness at all ; before which all hearts are open, and to which no secrets are hid ?

Again. It is observable that when a man has once begun to indulge the dispositions and habits of vice, he gradually withdraws himself from every object which may infer a reproach upon his conduct, or suggest to him the necessity of reforming it.

He



He deserts the places of public adoration ; he declines the society of pious and good men ; and suppresses the exertion of every thought that bears upon it any visible stamp of virtue and religion. He guards himself against the apprehension of God, as against a dangerous companion. He endeavours by all possible caution to avoid it, as a discerning spy into his most obscure retreat, the avowed adversary of his most favourite pursuits. He finds himself incapable of advancing one step, while this stands in his way ; it opposes his progress, as the armed angel did that of the ambitious prophet, and obstructs the accomplishment of his wicked views.

The conception of God, and an inclination to commit evil, are principles of such direct opposition and contrariety, that they never can in any degree of moral possibility reside at the same time in the same bosom. They must inevitably be destroyed by, and be the destruction of, each other. "What concord" (says the apostle) in a manner which implies the absolute impossibility of what he seems to make a doubt) "What concord, what harmony, what agreement, what union, can there possibly

“be between Christ and Belial? between  
 “piety and profaneness?” No more than between the two most discordant and contradictory existences in nature; between light and darkness: the one can only advance, as the other recedes; the appearance of the night will always bear an exact proportion to the declension of the day.

And as it appears, from this observation, that habitually bad men are obliged to banish the apprehension of God from their minds, as it remonstrates against their evil habits and intentions, and cannot ever be brought by any possible means to concur or coincide with them; so we may observe farther, that when persons who, in the common tenor of their lives, deserve to be ranked among the number of the good, have been insensibly led into any fault, or folly, by allowing the apprehension of God to slip inadvertently from their thoughts; it is to be observed, I say, that they endeavour earnestly (upon the first return of that apprehension) to divorce themselves from those errors, which they know can never be reconciled to any tolerable conception of the Deity.

It



It is not to be wondered at, if in so long, and in so intricate a scene of action, as the course of human life, a disposition to indolence should insensibly invade even the best of men. The most noble, the most enlightened minds we read of, have, at certain intervals, undergone a sort of *deliquium* and momentary eclipse; but whatever evil might have insinuated itself during that privation of God's informing spirit, yet at the return of his gracious presence it has vanished away. Though the mists and damps may creep up in the absence of the sun, yet are they instantly dispersed by the light of his countenance.

The evidence therefore of this assertion is equal in those cases where the commission of ill is consequential to an involuntary oblivion of the Deity, and in those where the previous inclination to vice has made it necessary to suppress the remembrance of it. I would be understood to say, that the truth of this proposition, "that a man cannot  
" abandon himself entirely to the commis-  
" sion of evil, till he has absolutely exclud-  
" ed the apprehension of God from his  
" thoughts," is not more evident from the laborious efforts to which men, resolutely  
bad,

bad, are obliged to have recourse, in order to extinguish effectually that apprehension; than it is from the sincere and eager endeavours of men, good in the general, to recover themselves from the failings they have incurred during a temporary and unintended suspension of it.

Upon the whole, you must see, that while men keep up the apprehension of God upon their hearts, they cannot ever become entirely reprobate. A man's belief will only be a continual thorn in his side, while his actions contradict it. We read, 'tis true, that the very apostate spirits believe, but that they tremble too; and so does every man whose conscience and whose conduct are of different parties. In short—it is not possible for any one to be a true believer and a bad man long together. He will soon find himself obliged to make a thorough change either in his persuasion or in his practice.—But,

Secondly, When the apprehension of the Deity is once suppressed, a man may be led imperceptibly, by the delusive attraction of error, through each successive degree of impiety, till he arrive at last at a state of absolute insensibility and final impenitence.

While



While the apprehension of God presides over the mind, it keeps every meaner thought in subjection; it raises a man's ideas to a contempt of baser objects; and controuls and regulates his whole procedure. But no sooner is that excluded, than every petty passion, every low desire, breaks out into open act, and usurps by turns the tyranny of the soul.

I think that the mind in this situation may be compared, not unfitly, to a promiscuous assembly of men; who, so long as they have any one person of dignity and authority at their head, move on in an amicable confederacy together, and promote one common end by an agreeable variety of operation. But, that authority being once dissolved, the subordination is lost, and the whole reduced to anarchy and confusion. Each man is ready to assume what no man is willing to concede; and the government entirely unhinged by the multitude of those that would govern.

When this primary restraint, this grand preservative, is once removed, a door is opened to every folly. The bad affections, which were before chained down, are now

let loose; and sin, deceitful enough in itself, gains an easy ascendant upon a mind which is willing to be deceived, and which dreads nothing so much as the necessity of subscribing to conviction.

There is a sort of melancholy pleasure in observing by what shallow reasonings, by what poor pretences, men suffer themselves to be cheated out of their virtue! how not only without regret, but even with rapture, they part with a blessing which is become uneasy to their new-conceived desires!

First, One pretence that is generally made is, “ That religion contracts our faculties  
 “ into narrow bounds; that, in order to en-  
 “ large them, it is necessary to burst her  
 “ bands asunder, and cast away her cords  
 “ from us; that every passion has its natural  
 “ object, and that it is an infringement on  
 “ natural liberty to restrain the indulgence  
 “ of them; that, since life is at best so short,  
 “ the best method of making it longer is to  
 “ enjoy it; that the severities and rigours  
 “ which are imposed by religious ordinance  
 “ are only the inflictions of politic priests,  
 “ who (being disabled by age and infirmity)  
 “ would willingly make atonement for their  
 “ own



“ own transgressions, by laying the severest  
“ restrictions on the liberties of others ; that  
“ religion, in short, is the merest slavery; and  
“ that a man denies himself a pleasure which  
“ nature has allowed him, who does not  
“ give a full scope to the indulgence of every  
“ passion.”

I allow this to be a very antient system of practical infidelity ; so antient as to have obtained before the days of Solomon, and is thus beautifully represented in the book of Wisdom — “ Our life,” say the libertines of that age, “ is short and tedious, and in the  
“ death of man there is no remedy, neither  
“ was any man known to have returned from  
“ the grave. For we are born at all adventure, and we shall be hereafter as if we  
“ had never been ! For the breath in our  
“ nostrils is as smোক, and a little spark in  
“ the moving of our hearts ; which being  
“ extinguished, our body shall be turned into  
“ ashes, and our spirit shall vanish as the  
“ soft air. And our name shall be forgotten  
“ in time, and no man shall have our works  
“ in remembrance ; our life shall pass away  
“ as the trace of a cloud, shall be dispersed as  
“ a mist that is driven away with the beams  
“ of

“ of the sun, and overcome with the heat  
 “ thereof. For our time is a very shadow  
 “ that passeth away, and after our end there  
 “ is no returning; for it is fast sealed, so that  
 “ no man cometh again. Come on, there-  
 “ fore : let us enjoy the good things that are  
 “ present; let us speedily use the creatures as  
 “ young men do; let us fill ourselves with  
 “ costly wine and ointment, and let no  
 “ flower of the spring pass by us. Let us  
 “ crown ourselves with rose-buds before they  
 “ be withered, let none of us go without his  
 “ part of our voluptuousness, let us leave  
 “ tokens of our joyfulness in every place;  
 “ for this is our portion, and our lot is this.”

Thus said the voluptuous of those days, in terms too like to those of ours; reasoning with themselves, but not aright. For this method of arguing is attended by two very great and very evident defects.

First, That it deprives its adherents of the pleasures they pursue.

Secondly, That it involves them in the very slavery they pretend to avoid.

First—It is by no means evident (though it has been sometimes insinuated) that religion forbids the enjoyment of any delight  
 which



which nature and reason allow; and whoever presumes to exceed the bounds prescribed by reason and nature, will be sure to meet the disappointment his presumption deserves. And it is notorious to a degree, that those who pretend to a greater latitude of enjoyment than the rest of mankind, have in fact the least real enjoyment of all. They may hope or boast what they please, of increasing their satisfactions; they are increased like boiling fluids, which are only consuming most when they rise to the highest pitch.

But the man who acts within the prescription of nature and reason, enjoys his happiness by not devouring it; his temperance leaves the true relish upon every appetite, and he improves his pleasures by their diminution.

Secondly, The austerities which are charged upon religion (tho' religion certainly does (and so does reason too) prescribe some in particular circumstances to curb the irregularity of passion) are trifling, in comparison of the repeated penances, mortifications, and regimen, to which the libertine is reduced, by disappointed passions, a distempered constitution, and an unquiet mind. It is experimentally

perimentally evident, that men in general subject themselves to greater penalties in order to undo the effects of their vices, than would have been sufficient at first to have entirely prevented them. And it is universally allowed, that no tyranny is equal to that of a predominant and over-ruling passion, which commands a man at one time to go, and he goes; at another, to come, and he comes; at a third, to do this, and he does it. It breaks in upon his retirement; attacks him at the most unseasonable hour; supercedes the efficacy of his best resolutions; and rules absolutely, without controul, and without competition—so that this scheme of liberty is in truth nothing less than what it professes; while a subjection to reason and religion will be found to be the only true, the only perfect freedom.

Secondly, Another deceit that men are apt to put upon themselves is, “That the sins  
 “they commit are so inconsiderable, that  
 “they will certainly be overlooked by the  
 “eye of infinite Mercy; that they make  
 “such short incursions into the ways of  
 “wickedness, as to leave their retreat se-  
 “cure whenever they please; and that they

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“are in no danger of falling into any flagrant or presumptuous act of evil.” A notion this more flattering to men’s passions, and for that very reason more fatal to their virtue, perhaps, than any other. For persons who do deliberately persist in any degree of evil, every degree of which is forbid under the severest penalty by the same Divine authority, are not objects of God’s mercy, but of his just resentment. And their danger is equal to their presumption; for that opinion of the inconsiderableness of their sins, which first led them out of the road of virtue, will encourage them to go on a little still, and still a little farther, till (by neglecting to observe every small advance) they fall insensibly by little and little. They begin but with small quantities, who are inured afterwards to immoderate draughts of the most scalding liquors; and men are brought (by this unexpected gradation in vice) to commit crimes without reluctance, who would at first have startled at the very mention of their names. The progress of wickedness in men of this persuasion is something like the imperceptible growth of plants, in which though the motion be so  
U slow

flow as to elude the discernment of the eye in any instantaneous act, yet when we look back upon them (after some intermission of observation) we perceive an amazing and almost incredible increase.

This is so fatal a deceit, that one would almost be induced to think, that it had been better for some men to have fallen immediately into a flagrant breach of duty (upon their first revolt from virtue) than to have crept on in the commission of what are usually called inconsiderable sins. And for this reason—There is something so shocking to a mind (that retains any sense of God and goodness) in the reflexions which succeed the commission of any greater crime, that a man recoils from it with the utmost horror and detestation, and is often carried backward to greater degrees of virtue by the very violence with which he fell from it.

But, on the other hand, while a man continues to flatter himself that the sins he commits are trifling and venial, he is gradually amused into an increase of wickedness and guilt. He goes on step by step, without perceiving the progression, and is deluded  
into



into his destruction, by an opinion of his security.

And this brings on the last illusion in which sin is apt to involve the human mind; which is this—When the persons who have thought themselves so secure begin to look calmly back, and discover the unthought-of advances they have made in vice, they stand amazed; and conclude it as impossible for them now to return, as they did before to have proceeded so far. Their presumption is turned into despair; a situation of mind which precludes all endeavours after virtue and happiness; which generally ends in the dissolution of every religious principle, and of every moral tie; which leaves men at liberty to work all impurity with an insatiable appetite, and to run every length of evil, without restraint and beyond recovery.

I have now gone through what I proposed; and have endeavoured to convince you, that men can never become irrecoverably bad, till they have shook off their dependence upon God.—But that, after that dependence has once ceased, they may be (and generally are) led on by false pretences of pleasure

and liberty, and by flattering presumptions in favour of their sins, till they become quite hardened in their practices and desperately wicked.

You see then how extremely cautious we ought to be, to prevent in ourselves that *evil heart of unbelief*, in departing from the living God; how absolutely necessary it is for us to exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of us should be *hardened by the deceitfulness of sin*.

SERMON



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S E R M O N XIII.

*Sudden Prosperity fatal to Religion.*

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DEUT. VI. 10; 11; 12.

*When the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged; which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive-trees, which thou plantedst not, when thou shalt have eaten and be full ; Then beware lest thou forget the Lord.*

**W**HEN the great lawgiver and leader of the Jews had brought his people within the reach of that country which had seemed to fly before them for forty years; when they were now ready to enter upon the possession of the promises, and their hearts, which had fainted under the delay of

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their

their hope, were beginning to exult in the certainty of their success, he seems to have been affected with a sensible concern at the expression of their joy; he was apprehensive for their morals in this reverse of their fortune; he considered that spirits (like theirs) which had been so greatly dejected in one extreme, would in all probability be as highly elated in the other; and that their elevation might be attended even with more fatal consequences than their distress. He saw, or feared he saw, that when they should be intoxicated with the delusive sweetness of their better fate, they would punish themselves irreparably with the blessings of Providence, and make their prosperity a prelude to their destruction.

This reflection touched him near: he was not content to have brought them to the possession of their Canaan; he was desirous to perpetuate it to them and their posterity. He knew that his own commission was expiring, that thus far he was to go and no farther; he determined therefore to supply the want of his presence, by a legacy of his instructions. It was then he meditated and delivered those admirable directions, which if



they had observed with as much care as he recommended them with earnestness, Israel might have been still a people, Jerusalem have now stood, and their temple remained unto this very day. One of the principal of his instructions is contained in the words I first read to you, which, from the nature of his design, and without violence to his expression, suggest these four useful observations:

First, “That a just and constant sense  
“ of the Supreme Being, is the best security  
“ for a man’s virtue,” expressed in his admonition, “not to forget the Lord.”

Secondly, “That this sense is often much  
“ effaced, sometimes absolutely lost, in a  
“ state of ease and affluence,” strongly implied in the words, “When thou shalt have  
“ eaten and be full, then beware.”

Thirdly, “That such a state lays us under stronger obligations to retain and improve that sense upon our minds,” which I think clearly intimated in these expressions—“Great and goodly cities which  
“ thou didst not build, and houses full of  
“ all good things which thou filledst not,  
“ vineyards and olive-trees which thou  
U 4 “plantedst

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“plantedst not:” after the enumeration of every blessing, he repeats this consideration, “That they were not of their own acquiring.”

Fourthly, “That the strong obligations on one side, and temptations on the other, exact the utmost caution from us in the discovery and application of those means that are most likely to preserve it.” — “*Then beware.*”

Let us consider the truth of the first proposition, namely,

“That a just sense of the Supreme Being is the best security for a man’s virtue.” I say, a *just sense*, because (it must be allowed that) wrong apprehensions of the Deity have generally had a very unhappy influence on the interests of virtue; as is evident to every one who compares the religion and manners of the heathen world. Men usually endeavour to conform themselves to the character of that Being which is the object of their worship\*. The transition therefore was most easy from the adoration of beasts to the imitation of them; and what godlike

\* “At quem deum? qui templa cœli summa tonitru  
“concutit:

“Ego homuncio hoc non facerem?”



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virtues could reasonably be expected from men, when a calf was the model of their perfection? But the cause of reason was then sunk to its lowest ebb, when every passion which was a dishonour to the human nature was translated to the divine; when immodesty, intemperance, and inhumanity, were the sacrifices with which their gods were well pleased; when every temple was dedicated to a vice, every act of devotion was performed at the expence of a virtue; their whole religion was an introduction to immorality; and piety with them was but another word for prophaneness.

This was probably the reason why Moses was so particularly solicitous to suppress all personal representations of the Deity, through his whole œconomy; (not that painting and sculpture were in themselves so abominable arts, as deserved to be guarded against by an express prohibition, but) he knew very well, that the people would naturally borrow their idea of God from the representations they saw of him, and that the idea of their god would be the measure of their morality. This we have seen has constantly been the case in all the corrupted notions of God and  
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we shall find, that it will as necessarily be so, in the more pure and perfect conceptions of him.

You believe (for instance) that there is one God, eternal, invisible, in whose mind no passion of impurity or ill-will, no unkind or unchaste affection, has any place; who is for ever happy in the perpetual love and exercise of reason and truth; who made all things by his power, and preserves them by his wisdom; who formed mankind for happiness, and is daily conducting them towards it, by the amazing and inscrutable dispensations of Nature and Providence.

This is an idea which is congenial to the clear and uncorrupted understandings of men; it fills the mind with admiration and delight, and excites us to imitate what we cannot but approve; it inspires us with an honest ardour, to pursue at least what we cannot overtake; and to be as perfect in our little sphere, as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect in the highest. No man upon earth, who reflects upon the sanctity of God with any tolerable degree of seriousness or consistency, can allow himself in any indecency of thought or action; the consideration



tation of his equity must deter us from injustice; the idea of his benevolence induce us to humanity.

But the apprehension of his constant and universal presence is a very considerable accession to the cause of virtue. The approbation of all good men is as agreeable to the generous mind as the most fragrant odour is to the sense—'tis a natural and virtuous incentive to the practice of virtue. And if this be so strong a motive when we consider men alone as the spectators of our actions, how much stronger must the influence of it be when we look up to the approbation of angels and applause of God!

There are few things that have contributed more to the extent of vice, than the hope of secrecy; which vanishes at the very apprehension of a Being who seeth in secret. What hope of secrecy can he entertain, who knows that he is no more alone in his solitude than in the midst of society, nor less visible in darkness than at the noon of day? nay, who knows that his very heart is laid open to it's inmost recess, with all the imperfect materials of his thought, before they are connected or wrought into a design.

But

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But our idea of the Deity stops not here; we consider him, not barely as a spectator of our actions, but as a judge of them too; and he must be an insolent offender indeed who will dare to commit a crime in the sight of him, who he knows will judge him, who he is sure will condemn him for it. The very form of our laws seems to look upon this as an impossibility, when it imputes the guilt of every greater criminal to his *not having had the fear of God before his eyes.*

The hope of reward and fear of punishment add fresh vigour to the cause of virtue. How insensible a man must he be, who cannot be allured to the practice of virtue by the hope of immortal happiness—abandoned to the commission of ill, who cannot be deterred from committing it by the terror of eternal misery!

You see then what a direct influence a just and constant sense of the Supreme Being must necessarily have upon the manners of men. The contemplation of his perfections, the awe of his presence, the hope of his reward, and fear of his punishment, are so many several admonitions to us to walk before him and be perfect. 'Tis in vain for a man to



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talk of his faith, when he is defective in his works; what every one does, is a demonstration of what he believes. Our actions are nothing but the visible representations of our thoughts, and you may read the articles of a man's faith in the conduct of his life.

Upon the whole, it seems abundantly evident that a constant and awful sense of God must be universally attended with the practice of every thing that is good, and that there is in fact no difference between the ungodly and the wicked man.

Secondly, This sense is often much effaced, sometimes absolutely lost, in a state of ease and affluence.

The complexion of a man's mind does, I know not how, insensibly adapt itself to the circumstances of his fortune. 'Tis almost incredible how great an alteration in one is sometimes instantly produced by the least variation in the other; insomuch that one shall scarce know a person to be the same—nay, we even say, in common speech, that he hardly knows himself. Such uncertain inconstant creatures are we, whose strongest resolutions are so easily shifted about by every breath of fortune!

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We may perhaps recollect instances (if we can instruct ourselves without injuring the characters of others) where persons who have adorned a lower station of life with an humble reverence for God, and an hearty good-will towards men, have upon a sudden advancement left every virtue behind them. It seems to be the unhappy privilege of prosperity, to rob us of that which was dearer to the royal prophet than thousands of gold and silver. The observation of Moses has its foundation in nature, is evident to experience, and confirmed by a greater than Moses, who tells us, how difficult it is for those who trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God; and we find how difficult it is for those who have them, not to trust in them.

When we are under any immediate pressure of affliction, when we are despised and deserted by men, we look upon God as a present help in trouble—but that exigence is no sooner over, and we have recovered the ease of our former condition, than we begin to see him at a greater distance. We no longer call to Heaven for that satisfaction which we can now find from earth, but de-  
pend



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pend upon the second cause for that support, which ought only to be expected, which can never be attained but from the first. We begin to fancy ourselves established even beyond the reach of Providence, or the possibility of change. We say in our hearts, "I shall not be moved, I can never be in adversity." This vain imagination swells into pride, which, as the psalmist justly observes, is an infallible cause of impiety; the wicked, through the pride of his heart, will not seek God, neither is God in all his thoughts.

There is something in the very nature of ease, which is apt to enervate the mind, and introduce a languid effeminacy into all its faculties. The senses, by an habitual indulgence, gain ground upon the understanding, and usurp the province of reason, which must inevitably decline in proportion as the sensual affections prevail; the spirit becomes less willing, as the flesh grows more weak; we sink into an indolent oblivion of our Maker, and fall amongst the number of those who (as the apostle expresses it) are "lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God." We are led by a certain gaiety of spirit (which is insensibly inspired by an affluent circumstance)

stance) into an endless variety of amusements, which, being innocent in their beginnings, are more likely in their end to draw us into that which is less so, and imperceptibly betray us into a forgetfulness of God.

—The harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe and wine are in our feasts; but, in the mean time, we regard not the work of the Lord, nor consider the operation of his hand.

Luxury and intemperance are almost unavoidable consequences of levity and indolence, and as fruitful fountains of infidelity. The fumes of excess throw a cloud upon our better thoughts, and extinguish the little spark of divinity within us. It was even a proverbial expression amongst the heathen, "That without eating and drinking, the fires of their impurest goddesses would be quite extinct\*;" which is perfectly agreeable to the account given by the historian of the people of God, "they eat and drank before they rose up to play," that is, their luxury and intemperance preceded their idolatry.

Thus you see how every circumstance of a prosperous condition conspires to steal

\* "Sine Cerere et Baccho friget Venus."

from



from us a little of our religion; the irresolution, the pride, the ease, the levity, the luxury, that attend it, are daily and hourly depriving us of something that is good; they incline us less and less to retain the Creator in our knowledge, till they have reduced us at last to the miserable situation of those who live without God, and without goodness in the world.

It is obvious to observe here, that as every corruption in our principles is followed by proportionate decay in our practice, so (on the other hand) every corruption in our practice is attended with an equal decay in our principles; from whence it appears, that religion and virtue are inseparably united; they go hand in hand, they support alternately and are supported by each other; they must flourish and fall together; "they are lovely in their lives, and in their deaths" "they cannot be divided."

Thirdly, A state of ease and affluence, as it tempts us strongly to lose, so it lays us under greater obligations to retain and improve that sense of God upon our minds.

It is one of the first and strongest principles of humanity, to make the best return

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we can to every act of kindness; and the force of the principle must rise upon us, in proportion, as those acts increase in number or degree. He therefore who enjoys the greatest advantages from Heaven is obliged to make the most sincere and most constant acknowledgement for them.

You (to whom the words of the text are literally applicable) who inhabit great and goodly cities which you did not build, who inherit houses full of all good things which you did not fill; you whose country presents to you the purest springs without the toil of digging, and whose commerce supplies you with the produce of vineyards and olive-trees which were planted by another hand; you who are born to such possessions as many by the labour of a whole life are not able to acquire; you whose fortunes seem to be showered upon you directly from Heaven, while others are forced by the sweat of their brows to raise them from the earth; as you are blessed with higher degrees of the bounties of God, so are you more eminently obliged to preserve a stronger sense of them. Your duty increases with the eminence of your station,



station, and your obligations to it are multiplied by the number of your advantages.

Fourthly, You have now seen, “that  
“proper conceptions of God are the most  
“probable means of making men good,  
“and of keeping them so.” You have seen  
likewise, “that a state of plenty and indolence is always apt to obscure and sometimes absolutely suppress those conceptions, notwithstanding the stronger ties a man has, in such a state, to preserve them.” I shall now point out to you, in the last place, some of those means which seem most likely to preserve and improve those conceptions upon our minds. And I think there can be no better than those which Moses recommends to the Israelites in the words immediately preceding the text.—“The words,” says he, “which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children; and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou risest up.”

I shall invert their order, and begin with the morning. A man that thinks at all can hardly forbear (when he finds himself awake without the act of his own will) to address his thanks to the Power who raised him from that helpless (though friendly) oppression of his thought and motion; and is it not natural, when you compose yourselves to a state that carries so strong a resemblance of death in it, to send up one prayer to Him who is the author and preserver of life? When you thus begin and end your day, when you thus open your morning and close your evening, you cannot absolutely forget the Lord: especially if (in the second place) you make him the subject of your conversation too. But we seem to banish the name of God from our discourse, or only introduce it in such a manner as we are forbid to use it. If we did but converse upon the nature of God with half the warmth we usually do upon more trifling matters, we should not easily forget the Lord.

The third direction is, to teach the commandments of God to your children; but a

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man cannot well teach that to another, of which he is ignorant himself. And every time you endeavour to imprint a sense of God upon the minds of your children, you must necessarily make so strong an impression of it upon your own, that you can never be able to forget the Lord.

There is one particular institution of our religion, which seems immediately calculated to make us not forget the Lord.—“Do this, as oft as you do it, in remembrance of him.

These seem to be the most likely means to keep a sense of God alive upon your minds. Such a sense of God is the best preservative of your virtue, and you will find the practice of virtue to be the most solid foundation for happiness—present and future.

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S E R M O N XIV.

*The Sinner's Hope of Impunity  
groundless.*

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PSALM CXIX. 120.

*My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am  
afraid of thy judgements.*

**I**T is no small part of prudence, to proportion one's fear to his danger, and to restrain our hopes within the possibility, at least, of success. From hence a man draws a double security against those evils which exist only in imagination; and against those which are not less real, because we may be weak enough to fancy them otherwise.

'Tis equally weak (though in some cases not equally pernicious) to live in perpetual apprehension of ills which have no real existence in nature, and which consequently we can never suffer, as it is to have no apprehension at all of those evils, which do not only in reality exist, but which must also inevitably overtake us.

Perhaps



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Perhaps some of the greatest evils to which this little life of ours is evidently exposed, and with which the more lasting one, whether we are hastening, may possibly be embarrassed, are in a great measure owing to our not being sufficiently guarded in this point; are in a great measure owing to our ill-grounded hope, or to our as unreasonable fear. It is the business therefore, and will be the concern of every wise man, to examine thoroughly the objects of his hope and fear, that he may neither create to himself a pain which nature never intended for him, nor incur a punishment which Providence had given him a power of avoiding.

Every wise man (I say) will guard himself against these inconveniencies, in all his designs, in all his views, and in that most which most concerns him, the immediate result of his moral conduct, the final issue of his good or evil actions; and yet we see, that people in general are as little determined what may reasonably be hoped, and what ought reasonably to be feared, in this most important of all enquiries, as they are in those which are of infinitely less concern;—terrifying themselves on one hand with ima-

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ginary dangers, flattering themselves on  
the other hand with an exemption from mi-  
series which cannot be avoided.

How far these errors may be owing to the  
different constitutions of our minds, how far  
to our not attending so seriously and so fre-  
quently as we ought to the clearing up a  
matter of that importance,—and how far to  
the perverse application of those sacred wri-  
tings which alone are able to set that matter  
in its proper light, I shall not now enquire.  
In part, I believe, to every one of the three.  
—They seem to me to be founded in consti-  
tution, to be improved by inattention, and  
to receive a seeming sanction from ill-  
grounded interpretations of the word of  
truth. But be this as it may, the fact is  
evident; men do in general entertain most  
unreasonable hopes and fears with regard to  
the good or evil consequences of their actions,  
with respect to the final dispensation of the  
just Judge of heaven and earth.

Some considering their best actions as the  
objects of his indignation; others imagining  
their worst to be the objects of his compas-  
sion. One man represents him to himself of  
so unrelenting, so implacable, so vindictive



a disposition, as leaves no room for his mercy; another paints him of so benevolent, so compassionate, so complying a nature, as must exclude at once both his justice and his wisdom. This conceives him to be unwilling to pardon the slightest offence; while that looks upon him as incapable of punishing the greatest.

As I conceive the latter of these to be the most prevailing, as well as the most pernicious opinion of the two, I shall endeavour (for the present) to shake the false foundations of hope in those who extend it beyond what reason encourages, beyond what revelation allows,—by enquiring what just grounds a bad man has for his expectation of final impunity; what shew of reason he can have to hope that God will suffer his sin to go at length unpunished;—or rather to evince, that while he persists in his sin, he has but too just reason to tremble for fear of God; he has but too just reason to be afraid of his judgements.

I know but of two ways of coming at any tolerable knowledge of the Divine proceedings with respect to vice in futurity. The first is, to observe how he uses to proceed  
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with regard to it here; the second, in what manner he declares he will proceed with respect to it hereafter.

The one is a probable argument, founded upon this most reasonable presumption, That the future proceedings of the Almighty will be in some degree at least similar to the methods he pursues at present.

The other a certain one, depending upon this infallible truth, That the dealings of God with men will inevitably correspond with his declarations to them.

And to whichever side of these we turn our view, the prospect will not be extremely advantageous on the part of the sinner.

If we take our estimate of the consequences of vice in the next life from what we experience of its effects in this, it will be no strong inducement to us to continue in the commission of it: the very course and constitution of nature reclaims against it. One part of its punishment is inseparable from its existence; for every vicious disposition is armed, in some degree, against the person who indulges it, even from its first motions through all its succeeding operations upon the mind.

The



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The truth of this fact will appear beyond contradiction to any one who gives the least attention to what passes within himself, or to the visible effects of each passion upon any other man, while he remains under this unhappy influence, in the instances of lust, envy, anger, revenge, and all that legion of devils (for they are many) which usurp the dominion of the soul when the residence of the Divine Spirit is excluded from it.

What has been strongly said of one, may, with no great impropriety, be applied to all, "That the most inhuman tyrants never invented an engine, which could give such exquisite torture to humainty as they can do." It is true of envy in particular, and of the rest in proportion, "that it extends the mind upon a rack, till the very frame of the body gives way to the agitations of the heart."

Amongst the dispositions to do ill, we may reckon the want of inclination to do any thing. I look upon idleness as the most intolerable burthen in the world; no fatigue of employment can equal the uneasiness of having none; for in this there is a peculiar difficulty; when the man of business is tired,  
a ces-

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a cessation from it is his refreshment ; but the idle man can expect no relief, for his very rest is his incumbrance.

These are the hidden seeds of evil, which, like sparks of fire under ground, first eat their way within, and, when they are ripe for an eruption, burst forth to the horror and confusion of all about them.

It is clear then, that the passions which are subversive of general good are attended with sensations of pain in the minds of individuals.

Again, the actions which flow from these passions are, in their consequences, injurious to the persons who commit them.

Every session lays fresh confirmation of this truth before our eyes, and supplies us with tragical accounts of wretches, who have been trapped in the work of their hands, and whose wickedness is fallen on their own heads. There may be crimes, indeed, which creep, as it were, under the law, and criminals who have raised themselves above the reach of its execution : but in cases like these the censure of mankind is a supplement to the law ; and when the property and the person escape, we lay the fine upon the reputation. This is always a considerable, and  
has



has sometimes proved an unsupportable penalty.

But, if this could either be endured or evaded, there is yet another in reserve, that will be felt; and that the vicious man may be made thoroughly sensible, how impossible it is for him to escape justice, his own conscience obliges him, when he has been screened from every other quarter, to inflict it upon himself.

There is a course of action, resulting from the predominance of one ill-conducted passion, which insinuates itself into unwary minds, under the name and expectation of *pleasure*.

As the advocates for latitude on this head are many in number, I shall just glance at a practice, which the delicacy of our religion forbids us even to name; and as they are generally such as, excluding all other laws, make their appeal unto nature, unto nature let them go.

1. Nature then will inform them, “ That  
“ affection is weakened by a wandering in-  
“ clination to a multiplicity of objects, which  
“ is heightened and improved by being re-  
“ strained to one.”

As

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As the rays of light have but a loose effect when scattered carelessly abroad, compared with the more intense force they acquire by being contracted in the glass.

2. Nature again will cry aloud against the hardness of that man's heart, who can expose the person to whom he pretends affection, and the offspring to whom he owes protection, to circumstances of disadvantage, which no penitence on his part, no efforts on theirs, can ever efface.

In this case, his very pride will inflict on him a punishment, which he had escaped from his humanity.

I say nothing of the expence that attends this practice, which is such as the greatest fortune can barely support, and an inevitable destruction to a small one.

We have two very capital pictures left us by an excellent hand, of the principal heroes in these pursuits, very proper for the cabinet of a modern libertine.

1. An ox going to the slaughter; a heavy, stupid, well-fed animal, led or driven, every one can see whither, but itself.

2. A bird hastening to the snare; a giddy, foolish, fluttering creature, hurried swiftly



ly on, perhaps decoyed by the song of another, pleased with the prospect of a companion, till it finds itself in a cage.

3. The *dart piercing through the liver* needs no explication. In short, experience adds weight to the authority by which we are informed, “ That no unlawful enjoyment of sense whatever can equal the heart-felt satisfaction of having abstained from it.”

Besides, these pleasures belong but to one part of our life: they are not decent indeed at any time; but there is an age which least becomes them. Suppose then the mind to have been so long engaged in the service of the body, that it shall not be able to emancipate itself so soon as it ought: this is far from being a wild supposition; and this is a case that must be attended with very unpleasing circumstances.

But I hasten from this particular, to consider an objection or two, that has been made to the general argument.

It is a mistaken notion of many, that because the punishment does not in all cases immediately pursue the crime, it never will overtake it in any. This the wisest of men observed in his days to be an encouragement  
to

to sin; and we cannot but observe, that it still continues to be so, in ours: because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully bent in them to do evil. A very superficial view of things will serve to evince the falseness of this judgement. For nothing is more evident than that God, having established certain fixed and standing laws for the regulation of the universe, does not interpose judicially but in very extraordinary instances, leaving the transgressors of those laws to the natural effects of their folly, which are not less certain, but more fatal, from the slowness of their operation.

The bad effects of vice, though they begin to operate from the instant of its commission, do yet in many respects operate slowly and imperceptibly, being confirmed by degrees, and acquiring new strength as they advance.

There is still another objection which has been frequently made to the present administration of Providence with respect to vice—and that is, that it is in general more successful in this life than virtue.

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This is indeed a formidable objection, and has raised many scruples in the minds even of inspired writers. But there are considerations which will take off the edge even of this objection. For, in the first place, I think there is some reason to suspect the truth of the fact. There have, I grant, been many eminent instances of base and infamous men, who have been raised to the highest pitch of human grandeur: but have not the most unblemished characters likewise been raised as high?

In all the kingdoms of the earth, there are examples of the best of men ready to match those that may be brought of the worst.

But supposing the fact, it deserves to be remembered that the happiness, the real satisfaction of life, does not consist absolutely in the success of it; that though the vicious man does often succeed to the riches and honours of this world, his success is seldom, if ever, owing directly to his vices; that the worst of men have some good qualities, and that these must according to the settled order of things have their good effects; and that when the bad man has succeeded, by fraud

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or violence, to the utmost height of temporal prosperity, he sickens in the midst of it, and would willingly part with all his honors to be unconscious of the methods by which he attained them.

Let us look a little upon this mighty man—exalted we will suppose on his throne, cloathed with all the externals of human grandeur, and extolled by sycophants as a god.—Is this the object of your envy? do you call him happy? You mistake him quite.—He has a monitor within him that will not allow him to believe his flatterers; his violences, his excesses, his murthers, rise up against him; and, like the first murderer on earth, he fancies every man he meets is watching an opportunity to slay him. The punishment he deserves he always fears, and more than feels it in the apprehension. The very guards which were intended for his security, he looks upon as his executioners—he dreads his enemies, suspects his friends, abhors himself. He lives in a succession of fears and horrors, and dies by the hands of his servants, his kinsmen, or perhaps his own.

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And which of us now would be this envied man? Would the poorest of us all quit his innocence and poverty, his happy, unmolested poverty, for all this grandeur, attended with a thousand villainies, a thousand dangers, and ten thousand fears?

It appears then, that vice even in its most advantageous situation is laid under so many restraints and disadvantages, even in the present imperfect state of trial, as afford us a strong presumption, that it can meet with no agreeable reception in the future day of recompence.

And what we find thus obscurely delineated in the book of nature, we read still more clearly expressed in the book of Revelation. The declarations of God on this head are as plain as they are powerful, they are as easy to be understood as it is impossible they should be avoided.

In them we find that neither the triumphs of the wicked man, nor the distresses of the virtuous one, shall endure for ever. "That  
"there will be a day in which God will  
"judge the world in righteousness, by that  
"man whom he hath appointed—that he

“ will then render to every man according  
 “ to his deeds—indignation and wrath, tri-  
 “ bulation and anguish upon every soul that  
 “ doeth evil. That the wicked shall go into  
 “ everlasting punishment, as surely, for the  
 “ same reason and from the same authority,  
 “ as the righteous shall inherit everlasting  
 “ life.”

Hath he said, and shall he not do it? hath he spoken and shall he not make it good? The threatenings and the promises of God rest upon the same foundation; his veracity is equally concerned to fulfil one as the other; and as certainly as the good man shall be rewarded for his virtue, so certainly shall the bad one be punished for his apostacy and rebellion.

These are the evident declarations of God relating to his future proceedings with wicked men, which are entirely consistent with his present dealings with us; in which we find that every evil passion and its subsequent action is immediately attended with painful sensations.

These sensations were wisely annexed by the Author of nature to every action which might prove prejudicial to the bodies or to the

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the minds of men, to their present or future happiness. They were intended as gentle admonitions to us, to abstain from those acts, which, as they begin in pain, must end in death. When we persist in our ill intentions, notwithstanding these tacit remonstrances of nature and reason, we undergo the severest censure from our own judgements—we stand convicted within ourselves, of having transgressed the law of our own nature, and of having rebelled against the Author of it.

This is a grievous disease, and therefore we seek for means to palliate it.

Sometimes by racking the brain to invent arguments against a future state.

This is indeed a miserable refuge, a most uncomfortable consolation! for a man to sit down in earnest to deceive himself! to cheat himself of a hope which every wise man in every age has endeavoured to reduce to certainty!

But alas! he shall not be able to impose upon his reason, by all his sophistry. For let us allow him, all that the boldest libertine can demand, that all the arguments which have been offered in favour of a future state

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are founded in probability only; let us allow him that there has been no certain demonstration of it.

I am sure there has been, there can be *none against* it; and while there is but a bare probability for it, there always will be a rational ground for fear. He shall fear then what he does not believe; nay his very fear shall make him believe, and his belief shall make him tremble.

But he will say, perhaps, if there be a God, he must be infinitely good—I believe he must—I allow he is—but his goodness leadeth to repentance. The penitents are the objects of his mercy, the obstinate of his justice. However, since he cannot escape his justice, he will depend upon his mercy: Upon whose? upon the mercy of that God, whose authority he has despised, whose laws he has transgressed, whose name he has blasphemed, and whose existence he has endeavoured to thrust out of the universe! It is an uncertain and unsafe dependance! Can he, “who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” be so irresolute in his purposes as not to punish it? It can never be.

But



But for any thing that we know (and by what has been already observed, it seems more than probable that) the future punishment of vice may be as natural a consequence of its commission, as any necessary effect of its cause; and then we may conclude from what God does already, what it is reasonable to expect he will do hereafter. Does he interpose by a miracle to suppress the fever which you have brought upon yourself by your folly—or to support the constitution which is decayed by your intemperance?

If not; why should it be imagined that he shall change the course of nature hereafter, in favour of one who has already subverted it in opposition to him?

These are broken reeds! upon which if a man lean, they shall pierce into his hand!

Driven from these subterfuges—the sinner is left naked and open to the consciousness of his guilt, and to the dread of its consequences; the terrors of the Lord set themselves in array against him, and he sees that it is as unavoidable as it is dreadful to fall into the hands of the living God.

What shall he now do? whither shall he fly for succour? or where shall he seek

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for refuge? Shall he go to his past life?  
It reproaches him with his crimes. Shall he  
turn towards the future? It threatens him  
with punishment.

He can find no joy, no pleasing recollection behind—no hope, no flattering expectation before—he looks backward with remorse, and forward with confusion. Distraction presses him on one hand, and despair meets him on the other.

“ His thoughts are like the troubled sea,  
“ when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up  
“ mire and dirt; his flesh trembleth for fear  
“ of God, and he is afraid of his judgements.”

O consider this, ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you. Consider in this your day the things that belong to your peace, before they are hid for ever from your eyes.—Which that we may all do, God of his infinite mercy grant, through the merits of Christ, To him be glory, &c.

SERMON



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S E R M O N XV.

*Reflexion on past Errors, the Ground  
of future Caution.*

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PSALM CXIX. 59, 60.

*I thought on my ways, and turned my feet  
unto thy testimonies; I made haste and de-  
layed not to keep thy commandments.*

THE person who makes this declara-  
tion is David, that well-known king  
of Israel, whose eminent and illustrious  
virtues raised him to very high instances of  
God's distinguished favour and friendship;  
whose not less famous defect from decency  
and humanity, in two glaring acts of sensu-  
ality and oppression, had almost entirely  
excluded him in his weaker hours from those  
glorious testimonies of Divine approbation  
which had so constantly attended his better  
life. The Psalm from whence the words are  
extracted seems, from the whole tenor of it, to  
have

have been thrown together at the time when he was under the deepest conviction of his folly, and the severest sense of God's displeasure. Remorse for the consciousness of the foul facts; regret for the loss of God's favour, augmented by the open reproaches of his enemies, and the not less galling though more gentle reproofs of his friends, are expressed throughout in the most affecting strains of real penitence. The painful recollection of the pleasures he had long found in the paths of virtue, and in the consciousness of God's protection, embittered now by the anguish he felt from contrary pursuits and other apprehensions, make him break out into a strong encomium on the happiness of those who had never deviated from their original state of religion and virtue; into plain confessions of his own guilt and shame; into moving relations of the undeserved and implacable resentments of his adversaries; into warm representations of his former integrity and zeal; and into repeated declarations of his fixed resolution to regulate with more care his future conduct.

The



The whole hymn seems to have been uttered in that natural and agreeable confusion, in which one may easily suppose a mind sensible and honest in the main to have expressed itself, after the tumultuous fallies of vicious passion had given it leave to open its eyes, and see the wretched exchange it had made, from the peace and complacency in its virtuous conduct, to the insupportable compunctions of vice, and the altered aspect of a once friendly, now offended, God.

“Blessed,” says he, “are the undefiled  
“in the way, who walk in the law of the  
“Lord. Blessed indeed (I once felt it with  
“joy, with sorrow I repeat it now) are they  
“that keep his testimonies, and that seek  
“him with their whole heart. Oh ! that my  
“ways were directed to keep thy statutes !  
“then should I not feel the shame which  
“now oppresses me, when I had respect un-  
“to all thy commandments ! My soul clea-  
“veth unto the dust, it melteth for heavi-  
“ness ; it is continually in my hand ; I am  
“afflicted very much ! I confess that, before  
“thou didst make me sensible of my folly in  
“the mercy of thy judgements, I did go astray  
“like a sheep that is lost. But though this  
“be

“ be too true, yet against thee only have I  
“ sinned, and done this evil in thy sight :—  
“ nevertheless the proud have had me in de-  
“ rision ; they have forged a lie against me,  
“ though the truth was enough for them to  
“ have said ; they have dealt perversely with  
“ me without a cause ; my persecutors and  
“ mine enemies are many in number, and  
“ their quality not inconsiderable, for prin-  
“ ces have sat and spoke against me. But  
“ do thou consider mine affliction, and  
“ deliver me ; plead my cause, and deli-  
“ ver me ; for I have from my infancy re-  
“ joiced in the way of thy testimonies, I have  
“ adhered to them ; make me to go again in  
“ the path of thy commandments, for there-  
“ in have I delighted, and will delight : I  
“ will run that way when thou shalt en-  
“ large my heart.

“ Though my ways have been such as  
“ were never agreeable in thy sight, nor in-  
“ deed long so in my own ; though I have  
“ been inadvertently surprized into evil,  
“ and have run those lengths in it I never  
“ expected to have gone ; yet as soon as my  
“ awakening reason would give me leave to  
“ reflect, as soon as I recovered power enough  
“ to think on my ways, I turned ; immedi-  
“ ately



“ately and without hesitation turned my  
“feet unto thy testimonies,—nay, with an  
“eager and precipitant joy, I returned, I  
“made haste, and delayed not to keep thy  
“commandments.”

These were the reflections of that man after God's own heart, when he became sensible of the error of his ways, and discovered the folly and danger of his past transgressions. The false light of delusive passion had drawn him insensibly from the paths of virtue; but the returning dawn of reason shewed him the misery of pursuing those crooked ways, and put him upon exerting all his endeavours in order to recover his former course.

The ways therefore on which he thought, were those evil ways into which he had been hurried by the strength of passion; on which he reflected so seriously and closely, as not only to convince himself of the necessity of returning to a sincere obedience, but of proceeding immediately to act in such a manner as was naturally consequent on such a conviction.

So that my design, in this discourse, is not to recommend and enforce that general duty of reflexion and consideration, which all men should, and which all prudent  
prudent

prudent and wise men do apply to the conduct of their lives, to guide their feet in the ways of virtue and happiness ; but particularly to encourage and incite those who have once deviated from the way of righteousness, to endeavour their own recovery, as David did ; to make use of those painful sensations, which providentially follow the commission of evil ; to bring their minds to such a sincere abhorrence and detestation of their vices, and to such dreadful apprehensions of their consequences, as may carry them instantly back again to practise virtue, and fix them immoveably in the practice of it.

'Tis true, the consideration of our moral state is a duty that derives its obligation, and should take its beginning, from the first dawnings of our reason. To reflect what and where we are ; what business we have to do, and what time allowed to do it, whither we are going, and what account is to be made, to what dangers we are likely to be exposed, and how we may most probably consult our safety, should be the first suggestions of a mind conscious of its own freedom, and apprehensive of some future reckoning ; reflexions, which if they were to be-

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\* Felix

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gin where it is reasonable to expect they should, and be carried on with the different circumstances of our being, would entirely, or in a great measure at least, prevent that infinity of errors into which we see the deluded race of mortals perpetually falling, and make all those efforts unnecessary, which are now hardly sufficient to extricate them from their dangers. If this were the case, happy would be the condition of humanity ! the very necessity of instruction would be superseded by the natural application of our faculties, and reformation itself become needless, when error should be thus stifled in its birth. \* Happy indeed the man, who should be thus early sensible of his situation and circumstances, thus resolute to pursue, thus uniform in attaining, the ends of both. But since this is not generally, if ever, the case, in our present depraved and defective state ; since want of all, or of proper instruction in some, and predominant passion overbearing the influence of all information in others, preclude this heavenly scene, since offences must and do come, I esteem him † not unfortunate who can make

\* Felix qui rerum, &c. Virg. Georg.

† Fortunatus & ille. Virg. ib.

that

that use of those he has committed himself, to improve his future conduct ; who can draw so much good out of now unavoidable evil, as to raise the foundation of his virtues upon the sense of his failings, and convert the conviction of his follies to the promotion and advancement of real wisdom.

I cannot, I think, be misunderstood to intimate, I would not be thought to imagine, that any sincerity of repentance, how early, how intense soever, can be comparable to a perfect and uniform integrity of life, or that the most earnest endeavour to rise again can be equal to the merit of having never fallen. All that I intend is, what is evident to frequent observation, that men have sometimes drawn such degrees of caution from their own, as well as from others inadvertencies, as have thrown a singular circumspection over the succeeding parts of their character, and have rendered them more eminent examples of real virtue, than they might possibly have been if they had never erred.

This I take to have been the case of David, in the instance before us.

His crimes were great indeed and grievous, and stand recorded as lasting monuments



numents of human infirmity to latest ages: but, while we fix our attention on these glaring blemishes of his moral character, let us not overlook his hearty, though not early conviction, his contrition, his disquiet, his tears, his prayers, his vows; his resolution to recover himself, and his actual recovery in such a continued series of unintermitting penitence and piety, as equal, in my opinion, if not exceed, the unmeaning innocence of many others; and I make this observation entirely for the sake of those who may be apt (as humble minds are apt to do) to despond upon the recollection of their past miscarriages, by shewing what excellent uses may be made of them; checking at the same time the presumption of others, by representing, from the example before us, what instant, what ardent, what eminent efforts, must be made, if we hope to repair effectually those ruinous breaches in our souls.

The first thing then that must be done by him who is willing to make his past transgressions the instrument of his future virtues is, to *think on his ways*. This, in some measure, it will be impossible for him not to do.

Though the violence and impetuosity of

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passion

passion may for a while suppress the voice of conscience, it will most certainly find a time to speak ; it will suggest to him the baseness, the deformity, the ingratitude, the folly and misery of his proceedings, the poor deceit he has put upon himself, in bartering the solid satisfactions of conscious integrity, the certain dependance upon God's favour, and the glorious prospect of immortality ; for delusive dreams of fancied pleasure, ending or beginning rather in certain pains and fears, and a terrible expectation of future vengeance.

This is the time for him to exert his strength, to let his reason conspire with those inward admonitions of Providence, these gentle exhortations of God's informing Spirit, till he conceives the strongest detestation and abhorrence of his former practices, by seeing what he has already lost, and what he must still lose by persisting in them. Let him look back to the most antient records of time, to convince himself in what manner God has universally dealt with the children of disobedience ; let him see numbers of angelic natures, immaterial substances, high placed once in glory and power, detruded since from their original state of honour and



happiness for their defection from duty, their deviation from truth and reason.

Let him recollect the fatal effects of *one transgression* in the deluded parents of mankind, not more extensive in its influence than rigorous in its execution; the truth of which history we read but too sensibly written in our own wants and imperfections, in pain, and sickness and death; in a clouded understanding, a perverted will, impetuous passions, delusive affections terminating in the prevalence of moral evil, and the dreadful apprehensions of final retribution.

Let him recall the many instances of men (some great and good ones too) who have undergone the severest chastisements for *casual offences*. Let him open the ancient volume where he will, he can hardly miss some instance of individuals punished, of a people scourged, of kingdoms subverted, or of the earth itself overwhelmed for disobedience. Or, if he will judge of the greatness of God's displeasure against sin, by the only atonement he would accept for it, as the danger of the disease may be sometimes collected from the violence of the remedy; let him see the Son of God, the Son of his

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love,

love, exceeding sorrowful even unto death, praying in agony and sweats like drops of blood—"that, if it were possible, his Father " would remit that part of his punishment, " and let that bitter cup pass from him;" let him hear him once more expostulating most piteously on the cross—"My God, " my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What other more affecting instance would he have to convince him, if this cannot, of God's invincible aversion to sin?

But, as no arguments affect us so strongly as those which carry experience in their hands, let him turn his eyes inward, let him look within himself, let him see and feel the remorse, the anguish, the horror, the perturbation, the confused agitations of mind, which the commission of wickedness has excited in him; what tortures does he not endure, from apprehending the resentment of that powerful that formidable adversary, who makes the very heavens tremble at his look! What agony does he not suffer in feeling those denunciations of Divine vengeance in part already fulfilled, and dreading their entire completion hereafter, "That God " shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, upon " the



the head of sinners, that brimstone with  
“ tempestuous winds shall be the portion of  
“ their cup.”

From hence let him draw conviction of  
the folly and misery, as well as deformity  
and ingratitude, of his ways. From hence  
let him take such frightful pictures of sin, as  
may effectually deter him from any farther  
commerce with it. Let him impress such  
horrid images of it upon his mind, as may  
make him fly from it, as from the face of a  
serpent; as may urge him instantly to make  
haste and not delay to keep God's righteous  
judgements.

Nature itself, the great work of God,  
ever intent upon the preservation of her  
children, has impressed upon the minds  
of all, even of brutes and infants, a desire of  
avoiding whatever objects may at any time  
have proved frightful and injurious to them.  
Will the deer return to the toils from which  
she has just escaped? Will the simplest child  
be persuaded to touch the firebrand which  
has once given it pain? Who would wait  
the advances of a pestilence, or stand uncon-  
cerned while the earth was opening its mouth  
to swallow him up? Nor will any man,  
who has once formed to himself a just idea

of the infectious nature and pernicious effects of sin, allow himself to stand exposed one moment to the miserable consequences.

If he would convert his reflexions upon his past sins to any good influence upon his future life, he must represent to himself again and again the necessity of instant virtue, and the weakness of those pleas which make for the delay of it. Does he not know that without holiness no man shall see the Lord! that real virtue and obedience are the indispensable conditions of eternal mercy? Has he considered how many passions and inclinations are to be restrained or subdued? how many better dispositions to be acquired or cultivated? Has he considered the extent of life, and proportioned his work to his time? and does he find so little to be done, as will allow him to trifle away any of that time that is allotted for the doing of it? Is virtue a flower of so common and so spontaneous a growth, as requires no care to cultivate? or is vice a weed so unprolific and so weakly rooted, as may be plucked up in a moment, and spring up no more! Is the great adversary of mankind to be conquered without a struggle? or the assistance of God's  
good



good Spirit to be obtained without a prayer? Is eternal misery to be avoided by a wish, and immortal happiness to be attained at pleasure?

Let him that has tried answer—for he that fancies this, knows nothing of it.

But he is sensible, suppose, of the necessity of reformation, and will certainly set himself to that great business in earnest at the first *convenient* time; but *not to-day*.

But what is the difference of any time that is future from that which is now present? barely that it is uncertain, and that, if it ever happens, so much more of life is over without beginning the work—two very unlucky circumstances to make it preferable to the present!

It is most evident that there must be a beginning to reform, which the longer it is deferred, the work will be increased, the inclination to set about it, and the ability to perform it, be diminished. Is it reasonable to imagine that the difficulty of to-day will be decreased to-morrow? Will custom, that adds strength to all things, diminish the force of inclination and passion? and will

delaying to attempt our reformation make it more easy for us to reform? will the burthen, which we now think too heavy to bear, become more tolerable by adding to its weight?

Beside, the first years of our life are generally the best; the succeeding ones bring their business with them. If in the strength and vigour of youth we find ourselves unapt to perform this business, can we hope to find ourselves more inclined or more able to perform it in the infirmities of our wasting age; an age whose cares find it full employment; in which we may have trouble enough, even in supporting life, without the additional trouble of reforming it? Nor can we depend at all upon this scanty and ineffectual opportunity; even upon a supposition that nature should continue its course, and that Providence should not cut us off judicially from arriving at it! He that builds upon the use of any future day, especially of any distant one, must have entirely forgot that there are any diseases in nature which may disable his body, any violent shocks which may disorder the faculties of his mind; has forgot that there are such things as fevers,  
and



and palsies, and apoplexies, in the world; has forgot that he has no security for any moment of his life. Of the thousands that died yesterday, why does he fancy that many were not flourishing in youth and strength like him; perhaps, like him too, *resolving to reform to-morrow*. He must have forgot too, which ought most to be remembered, that it is by God's favour only that he can be enabled to do to-morrow what he is unwilling to attempt to-day. And why should he imagine that God, whose assistance he has so often refused, when it was offered, may not in his turn refuse it too when it is wanted? I will not allow myself to determine what God will do in cases like this; but I think one inspired by him makes him declare himself to this purpose—"Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I will also laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as a desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind.

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“ When distress and anguish cometh upon  
“ you, then shall they call upon me, but I  
“ will not answer; they shall seek me early,  
“ but they shall not find me.”

These are the reasons, the motives rather,  
which have induced men from time to time to  
delay that business which can never be begun  
too soon. These are the rocks that must be  
avoided by him who would profit from his  
own transgressions. Say not, “ I have sinned,  
“ and what harm hath happened unto me?”  
for though the Lord is long-suffering, he will  
in no wise let thee go. Concerning propiti-  
ation, be not without fear to add sin to sin;  
and say not, “ his mercy is great, he will be  
“ pacified for the multitude of sins;” for  
mercy and wrath come from him, and his  
indignation resteth upon sinners. Make no  
tarrying to turn unto the Lord, and put  
not off from day to day; “ for suddenly  
“ shall the wrath of the Lord come forth,  
“ and in thy security shalt thou be destroy-  
“ ed, and perish in the day of vengeance.”

Far other reasonings, far other resolu-  
tions, will he make, whose face is covered  
with shame at the recollection of his of-  
fences.



fences. When he considers how far he is gone out of the way, he will make the more instant haste to return. He shall be carried to greater degrees of virtue, by the very violence with which he fell from it; and over his early and hearty repentance there shall be "more joy in Heaven than over many others who need no repentance."

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S E R M O N XVI.

*The Christian Hope founded on Argument.*

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I P E T. iii. 15.

*Be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.*

**T**HIS epistle was written by St. Peter to several small congregations of Christians dispersed over the different provinces of the Lesser Asia. The design of it was, to support them under those afflictions to which they were immediately exposed by the profession of their new religion.—He puts them in mind therefore of those hopes which encouraged them, first to embrace, and afterwards adhere to, that profession. He suggests to them the reasons upon which those hopes were founded; and in the conclusion exhorts them to be always ready to give an answer



answer to every one that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them.

If we look upon the words in this light, I think they evidently imply these three distinct propositions :

First, That the Christian religion proposes to its professors the expectation of a happiness, which shall be an equivalent at least for all the pleasures they shall lose, and all the pains they shall suffer, on account of that profession.

Secondly, That the expectation of this happiness does not rest upon slight and groundless presumptions ; but is built upon rational and certain principles, deduced from strong and convincing proofs.

Thirdly, That it is the duty of every Christian to consider the reason and certainty of those principles, to examine the validity and evidence of those proofs, as well for his own satisfaction and security, as that he may be able to give a solid and substantial answer to any one who shall (either ignorantly or insolently) demand what arguments he can offer in support of that hope which is in him.

Let us make a short inquiry into the truth of the first proposition, and see whether Christ  
has

has actually proposed such a degree of happiness to his followers, as shall be an adequate compensation to them for the cheerful resignation of those pleasures which they might otherwise have lawfully enjoyed, or for their patient submission to those pains which they might otherwise have innocently avoided.

In that compleat discourse which he delivered to multitudes of people (of different countries) after having pronounced several benedictions upon particular virtues, he concludes with declaring those thrice happy who should at any time or in any manner suffer for him and his cause. “ Re-  
“ joice,” says he, “ and be exceeding glad,  
“ for great is your reward in heaven.”

In another place (after some personal promises to his apostles) he makes a second general declaration to the same effect, “ That  
“ every person who had left either father or  
“ mother, or brother or sister, possession or  
“ property of any kind, for the sake of him  
“ or his religion, should inherit eternal  
“ life.”

It is remarkable, that this passage is an answer to a question of St. Peter's, and seems to be alluded to, and explained (as the foundation

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dation of that hope which he would encourage in his disciples) at the beginning of this epistle: "Blessed," says he, "be the God  
"and father of our Jesus Christ, who (of his  
"abundant mercy) hath reinstated us in  
"the hope of life, by the resurrection of  
"Christ Jesus from the dead, to the hope  
"of an inheritance incapable of corruption,  
"pollution, or decay, reserved for us in  
"heaven." For which reason he commanded them (as Christ had done before) "to rejoice, notwithstanding the present inevitable sense of affliction in their various trials; through which," continues he, "you  
"shall pass as gold through the fire, coming  
"out more pure, and more beautiful than  
"before;" as another apostle on the same subject has assured his disciples, "that their  
"light and momentary afflictions should  
"work out for them a far more exceeding  
"and eternal weight of glory."

I would only observe, that the different expressions of "a reward in heaven, eternal life, incorruptible inheritance, and eternal weight of glory" (being equally applied to persons in the same circumstances, and promised as rewards of the same sufferings) must necessarily signify the same immortal

mortal happiness, which in another part of our revelation is described to be such as “ it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive.”

From all which it is as evident as words can make it, that Christ has promised to recompense all those who have suffered for him or his religion, with a happiness eternal in duration and infinite in degree.

But you will say, what share have we in these promises, who have never suffered, nor are likely to suffer, in the cause of our religion. To which I answer, your business indeed is different, but your hope the same. It belonged to the first propagators of Christianity to lay down their lives in testimony of the truth, it belongs to you to give up yours to the practice of it; it was their part to suffer, 'tis yours to act. And how much more easy, how much more agreeable, is the task to do good than to endure evil! You are the happy people who are called in at the last hour, to receive an equal reward with those who have laboured under the heat and burthen of the day.

Nor is your circumstance absolutely without its difficulties;—you have your passions and

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and propensities to overcome;—there is in the moral, as in the natural world, a constant tendency towards earth; you must endeavour to raise your thoughts above the sphere of its attraction; the conquest of every passion is one step farther from earth; the acquisition of every virtue is an advance nearer to heaven. If you encourage and improve in yourselves the dispositions to piety, humility, temperance, justice, gratitude, and humanity; you will find that the kingdom which was promised to the martyrs was also prepared for you from the beginning of the world.

Secondly, The next question to be considered is, Whether the expectation of that happiness which Christ has promised to those who profess and practice his religion be founded upon any rational and certain principle, upon any strong and convincing proof?

That it is, I shall now endeavour to demonstrate.

'Tis well known, and every where allowed, that the Jews from express revelation, and the other nations from ancient tradition, did expect a person commissioned from heaven to reform and bless man-

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kind. The time limited for accomplishing the prophecies was run to its final period. It was expiring. It stood suspended (as it were) and waited for their completion in that great event.—Christ appeared, in whose character every particularity of the prophets did so manifestly center and unite, that the predictions of his life, so many years before he existed, seem rather to have been the history of his actions transcribed from his existence.

When he was first introduced and initiated into his office by the baptism of John, the heavens opened! the Spirit of God descended visibly upon him, and pronounced him to be that “beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased!”

The prophet was convinced! his disciples doubted; he sends them to Jesus for farther conviction; they find him surrounded with multitudes; exercising his power on the objects of his compassion; they demand a direct answer to this question, “Whether he “be the person who was to come from God, “or they must still expect another?” He refers them to his miracles; “you see, says he, “what I am doing; the blind are spectators “of my works; the deaf my audience, the

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“ dumb speak my praise; I give health to  
“ the sick, strength to the weak, feet to the  
“ lame, life to the dead, and peace to the  
“ poor.

“ My bare assertion will be but the evi-  
“ dence of a person in his own cause, which  
“ is often false, and always suspicious; my  
“ actions are the evidence of God himself,  
“ which excludes the imputation of falsehood  
“ or suspicion.”

The works to which he appealed were as far beyond the reach of art to counterfeit, as they were evidently beside the course of nature to effect.

Will the tumultuous ferment of the blood subside at the touch of the physician's hand? does he send his word and make his patient whole? do his prescriptions run in this commanding form, “ I will; be  
“ thou clean?” Will the eye that has been locked up in darkness for twenty years admit the light in an instant when the artist knocks? or will the deaf ear break its obstructions at the call of his voice?—Every person who is the unhappy subject of these infirmities is sensible of the inefficacy of these experiments.

In short, he every where appeals to these facts as an indisputable authority of his com-

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ming from God. And indeed it is impossible for any one to give a stronger proof of a Divine commission, than an unlimited exertion of the power, and a constant imitation of the goodness, of God.

His discourse with Philip upon this subject is very observable.—Philip expresses a desire to see the Father.—Christ tells him (to his great surprize) that he had already, and often seen him. He explains himself in this manner:—"The words which I speak" (meaning those powerful words by which he commanded the powers of nature) "I speak not of myself; but the Father, who is (virtually) in me, he doth the works." As if he had said, "These operations are of such a nature, that they give you ocular demonstration of the presence of God. They make the Divinity visible, as far as it can be so to human sight."

The pretenders to reason have found out two ingenious ways to evade the force of this argument: one, by denying the miracles; the other, by ascribing them to the direction of a malevolent agent. By the first, with their usual modesty, they destroy the common sense of mankind. By the second, with equal piety, they subvert the wisdom and goodness of God.

With



With respect to the first, I shall not trouble you with considering the nature of historical evidence in general: as far as it affects this particular case, I think this a sufficient answer—That there is more reason to believe this history true than any other whatever, because there have been more unsuccessful attempts to prove it false. That it has never yet been proved a fiction, is to me the most incontestable proof of its being a fact. If it had not actually been the most evident truth, it must long since have appeared to have been the most notorious fraud.

Nor has the second one grain of truth or sense in it more than the first.

To ascribe those operations (which tended to promote the natural and moral interests of men) to the agency of a malicious being, is to confound ideas, to unite contradictions; it is (in effect) to assert that virtue and health are misery, that disease and vice are the perfection of our nature.

But let us suppose (for a moment) that the Divine interposition in the production of these events was not so evident; let us suppose the whole scheme to have been an imposition, and see how we can justify the

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goodness and wisdom of God, upon that supposition.

A person comes into Judea—takes hold of a vulgar error of the people—pretends an authority from God, and backs his pretensions by suspending, inverting, fixing and refixing the laws of nature, in opposition and defiance to the Author and Governor of nature.

The same thing is declared by voices from above, and seconded by repeated thunder. 'Tis something strange that so many thunders should attest the fraud, and that not one should blast the impostor, and detect the imposition—surely these tares were sown in the field, not when men only—but when the Deity slept.

But, while Heaven was pleased to wink at the deceit, the providence and justice of the Jews inflicted on him his proper punishment—"They crucified him and laid him in the grave." But why did they not keep him there, where his works and his remembrance might have died and been buried with him?—His resurrection gave new life to his design, and the second error was indeed worse than the first.

This



This was that master miracle upon which he triumphed openly, and ascended visibly on high. This was the corner-stone upon which the hope and glory of his church was founded.

Now I say that whoever does ascribe all these events to magic or illusion, or imposition of any kind, does in reality arraign God of a neglect or intention which could hardly be imputed (in the like circumstances) to the weakest or worst of men.

This is to plunge men into inevitable error, by permitting such supernatural attestations of a falsehood, that it must be an unpardonable infidelity to persist in the truth, a most obstinate impiety not to believe the lye.

What anarchy must this introduce into the moral government of the universe, when the best use of our reason must necessarily involve us in delusion, and we have no security against the imposture, but to act irrationally!

From the inconsistency and absurdity of these two objections, it necessarily follows, That the miracles wrought by Christ are one strong and convincing proof for the divinity of his mission, and consequently a rational

and certain foundation for expecting that happiness which he has promised.

His own prophecies I look upon as an argument distinct from the miracles, as they are derived from different attributes of the Deity; one from his power, the other from his prescience. And indeed, if it be considered attentively, I think it not inferior.—Those which regard the events which were to happen to his apostles are very particular—but that which foretells the destruction of the temple, the desolation of the holy city, and the dispersion of the Jews, is amazing: in this particular, the very adversaries of our religion are become involuntary advocates for it, and afford us a stronger argument from their opposition, than could possibly have been drawn from their conversion.

The last argument I shall urge in support of the second proposition is this—That the present satisfaction which results from the practice of the Christian morality evinces its rectitude, and confirms its Divine original.

The wise and benevolent Creator has so formed the mind of man, that it is naturally delighted



delighted with reason and truth, displeased and dissatisfied with falsehood and folly.

Virtue is the health and vigour of the soul, and diffuses the most agreeable sensation through all its powers. Every deviation from it is a declension towards an unnatural and distempered state, and attended with proportionate degrees of pain and anxiety. There may indeed be persons who seem little sensible of the pain of vice, or even flatter themselves with the imagination of exquisite transports in the pursuit of it.

These are cases which resemble the insensibility of a paralytic—or the miserable rapture of a man in the delirium of a fever. Nobody envies the numbness of one—and every body trembles at the anguish of the other, when the scattered senses begin to return, and the agitated spirits struggle to recover their natural state.

Nor do the doubts and discontent of many well meaning Christians in the least contradict what I have here advanced—being generally the effect of little blind notions that have crept in with our alphabet—and are never to be charged upon Christianity—but upon the corruption of it.

I wish

I wish from my heart that every man who has any scruples about Christianity would take the pains to make himself master of this one argument for it. I am persuaded, he would have the conviction of his senses for the truth of his religion, and feel the divinity of its original.

Thirdly, I shall now add a few words, to shew the duty of examining these principles, in order to clear up your own reasonable doubts, and to silence the unreasonable cavils of others.

It is certainly no more real merit, or the contrary, to be born where the true or a false religion is professed, than it is to be born in a hot or cold climate.

To continue therefore of a religion, because you were born in it, is the worst reason in the world. That may be a happiness—this must be a fault. Upon this principle, the very reason which now makes you a Christian would (if you had not been born one) have prevented absolutely your ever being so.—The merit depends upon the choice, and the excellency of the choice upon the motive that produced it. 'Tis a sin to take your faith from the custom of  
your



your country, when there are so many better reasons to be given for it. 'Tis a justice to yourselves, to examine them; tis a justice to your profession, to assert them. You are in no danger, 'tis true, of being called before the magistrate (as the first Christians were) to make a public apology for Christianity—but you may meet with antagonists in private. There are a set of active spirits, who, when they want other employment, think it their duty to overturn establishments, and emancipate the world from the unnecessary restraints of reason and religion. These philosophers, by the dextrous application of a few words, such as superstition, zeal, priest-craft, enthusiasm, and so forth, will pluck up all religion, in an instant, by the roots. But you owe them the kindness to confute their folly, you owe them the ungrateful charity to inform them better.

Indeed one has scarce ever yet heard an objection to Christianity, that did not confirm one's faith in it. Its enemies are as great an honour to it as its friends; and what has been said for it on one side, receives an additional force, from what has been said against it on the other.

When

When one looks back upon the constant opposition, the reproach, the calumny, the cavils, the controversies, against which it has stood and flourished for seventeen hundred years together, it always brings to one's mind, that (almost prophetic) similitude of the skilful architect, who "laid the foundation of his house so securely, that though  
" the rain descended, and the floods came,  
" and the winds blew, and beat upon that  
" house—yet it fell not—for it was founded  
" upon a rock."

SERMON



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S E R M O N XVII.

*A Prophecy literally accomplished.*

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M A T T H. i. 22, 23.

*All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord, by the prophet, saying,*

*Behold! a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which, being interpreted, is God with us.*

THE attacks which have been made upon the religion of our blessed Lord, on the subject of prophecy, would have been as innocent as they were impertinent, if they had not been helped forward by the extreme caution of those who engaged upon the same subject in its defence. The enemies of Christianity did her less discredit on this side than some of her friends. Her antagonists managed a very little wit with a great deal of dexterity; her advocates threw away an

an immense quantity of erudition with less execution than one might have expected. While they were wandering abroad in quest of literature, through the vast tracts of Rabbinical tradition, they suffered their judgment and good sense, more useful instruments than those they exchanged them for, to lye unemployed at home.

The business was reduced to a short and plain issue. The only question to be determined was, Whether there are any express declarations in the Old Testament cited in the New, as predictive of events recorded to have happened in the New. The writers who oppose Christianity assert roundly, that every prophecy cited by the authors of the New Testament from the Old, so plainly relates in its obvious and primary signification to other matters than those which they are produced to prove, that it would be the highest absurdity to offer them in proof of our religion. And if this fact be true, there can be no doubt about the inference; for if the authors of the New Testament have produced prophecies from the Old Testament, as predictions of facts recorded in the gospels, and if there be no prophecy in the Old Testament, which



which in its plain, obvious, first, and literal sense, is predictive of some event relative to Christ, which is related in the New, it is most certain, that there can be no conclusive proof drawn for the truth of Christianity from the prophecies of the Old Testament, as they are cited in the Gospel. And though one very able apologist has, with great labour and equal learning, endeavoured to shew literal prophecies in cases which are not cited in the New Testament, yet in this very instance in the text, which he allows to be the principal in weight, and which ought therefore to be first cleared, he seems at first to hesitate, and to doubt, whether he shall consider it as a typical, or as a literal single prediction. He is by no means determined, whether *fulfilled* means absolutely fulfilled, or barely, that the two events compared together do agree remarkably in some particulars; and tho' towards the conclusion he takes courage, and says, "we ought to understand "the birth foretold did not relate to an ordinary child;" yet, after all, he foresees but one objection to interpreting the whole typically, and that is, that neither Targum, Talmud, nor Rabboth, have applied it so; and  
allows

allows us only the use of the literal, in case the typical sense should fail. He is willing however to justify the evangelist in his application of it, take it which way you will.

In this I beg leave to dissent from so great an authority. I think it is not possible to justify the typical application of this prophecy; and from thence I conclude, that it was not intended to be so applied by the evangelist. And I cannot help thinking, that this is one prophecy from the Old Testament, which has so close a correspondence to a very considerable event recorded in the New, that it appears at first sight to be so peculiarly descriptive of that, as not to be at all applicable to any other event whatever; and upon enquiry I believe it will turn out so; I say, *I believe* it will, because at present I lay no stress upon the authority of the evangelist in the application of this prophecy to this event. I consider him now merely as an historian; and desire no farther credit to be given him, than to admit the account he has here given of the birth of our blessed Saviour. And the reason why I do so is, that this is the only possible way that I know, of forming an argument for the truth of Christianity, from  
prophecy



prophecy independent of the authority it derives from the miracles wrought by our Lord and his followers. For upon supposition that no one miracle had ever been wrought by Christ or his disciples, yet would it be a sufficient evidence of the truth of his mission, to shew, that the very peculiar circumstances which attended his birth were in the plainest and clearest terms delivered seven hundred years before he was born. The reason is plain:—Futurity is a land of darkness and of silence; the objects of it are not to be discerned by the eye of angels, its histories are only to be written by the pen of God.

This cannot be contested by the most determined infidel, and is even confessed by those who are most determinately against us in this question, the chief of whom declares it to be a strange assertion, that scepticism and infidelity should increase amongst us, when literal prophecies have been clearly and directly fulfilled, upon this avowed persuasion of his own, “That a prophecy literally fulfilled is a real miracle; and that ONE such produced, to which no exception could justly be made, would go a great way in convincing all reasonable men.”

Such a ONE, for the conviction of all reasonable men, and to the confusion of those that are obstinately otherwise, is produced by the evangelist, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son;" as I shall now proceed to shew, by proving, 1st, That in its original delivery it had no sort of reference to the persons to whom it is applied by Jews and Infidels; and, 2dly, That it is literally applicable, and therefore originally intended to be applied, to this event alone.

First then I am to shew, that Isaiah's prophecy, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son," had not originally any reference to the persons to whom it is said to refer by Jewish, Infidel, and even Christian writers.

And, that I may not lessen the difficulty by sinking, or raising, or colouring any part of the transaction, I will represent it to you in the words of one who professes a thorough disbelief of all prophecies, whether Pagan, Jewish, Christian, or Mahometan.

He tells us, "that the words, as they stand in Isaiah, do in their obvious and literal sense relate to a young woman, in the days of Ahaz king of Judah, as he presumes will appear from this representation of the con-

"text—



*A Prophecy literally accomplished.* 371

“text—When the kings of Syria and of  
“Israel were confederates against Ahaz king  
“of Judah, Isaiah the prophet was sent by  
“God to comfort Ahaz, and to assure him  
“by a sign, that his enemies should in a  
“little time be confounded. But Ahaz re-  
“fusing a sign at the prophet’s hands, the  
“prophet said, The Lord shall give you a  
“sign, *A virgin shall conceive, &c.* And  
“this sign is accordingly given Ahaz by the  
“prophet, who took two witnesses, and in  
“their presence went unto the said virgin,  
“or young woman, called the prophetess,  
“who in due time conceived and bare a son,  
“who was named Immanuel, after whose  
“birth the projects of the kings were soon  
“confounded, according to the prophecy  
“and sign given by the prophet.

“This,” he concludes, “is the plain drift  
“and design of the prophet, literally, obvi-  
“ously, and primarily understood;” and  
in support of this interpretation quotes a thou-  
sand great names, “whose authority is suffi-  
“cient to establish any thing that can be  
“established by mere authority.”

Now hear the prophet speak for himself:  
“When Ahaz had refused to ask the sign

“ which the Lord had encouraged him to  
 “ ask, as a proof of his power to defeat the  
 “ designs of his enemies, the prophet no  
 “ longer addresses himself to Ahaz, but turns  
 “ abruptly to the whole house of David.—  
 “ Is it a small think to weary men, but will  
 “ you weary my God also? Therefore the  
 “ Lord himself shall give you a sign, *A vir-*  
 “ *gin shall conceive*; as if he had said—Be-  
 “ cause this man hath rejected the offer I  
 “ made him, let him consult for himself. I  
 “ now turn to you: you see you are not  
 “ able to oppose the power of two men who  
 “ are invading you; this is the object of  
 “ your present fear, and do you suppose you  
 “ shall succeed better in opposition to my  
 “ God? To shew you the vanity of such an  
 “ expectation, to shew you how eligible a  
 “ friend, how formidable an adversary the  
 “ Lord is, therefore the Lord himself shall  
 “ give you one instance of his universal do-  
 “ minion, *A virgin shall conceive.*”

It is clear from the circumstances of the  
 history, that the sign was not intended for  
 Ahaz;—and it is not less evident from the  
 reason given, why the Lord himself should  
 give them a sign, that is, to evidence his al-  
 mighty



mighty power, that what this author asserts to be the obvious and literal sense, cannot possibly be so, because, in the sense he would have the words understood, they include no manner of proof of the very thing which God intended to prove by them. For what demonstration of the Divine power, or what matter of comfort, could arise to them from their being told, that something would some time happen, which they knew did and would happen every hour, without the immediate interposition of God, and without the discovery of a prophet?

But, besides, the word itself is confessed by those who are allowed to be the best judges of the genius of that language, to signify most literally, obviously, and primarily, a person in such circumstances as make the accomplishment of the prediction absolutely impossible, otherwise than by an immediate interposition of God. And indeed the other interpretation bears as hard against the typical as against the literal sense; for he who can make the conception of a matron a type of the conception of a virgin, may, if he pleases, make the birth of a daughter a type of the birth of a son, or a dead man a type of a living one, or any

thing of any thing. But I hope he will be cautious how he imputes such argumentation to Infinite Wisdom, who cannot be the author of such ambiguous oracles as were never issued out of a heathen temple; nor take pleasure in confounding the little understanding he has been pleased to lend us, by destroying all distinction, and opening a door to the most chimerical and visionary interpretation of his word.

The Jews had too much sense to apply it as a type, and too little to take it in the letter; which is the plain account why they have not made any application of this prophecy at all.

But we have another difficulty to get over; for he adds, "That the prophet himself puts it beyond doubt, by express words, as well as by his whole narration, that his own child was the sign mentioned, when he says, Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel---from the Lord of Hosts who dwelleth in Mount Sion."

A little attention to the text of Isaiah will shew that this observation turns directly  
against



against the point he would establish, viz. "that the prophet's sons were the sign here mentioned."

Isaiah, at the time he delivered this oracle, had one only son, an infant, whom he was expressly commanded by God to take along with him, when he went out to meet Ahaz; this son therefore could not be the sign which the Lord intended, by declaring "that a virgin should conceive," because he was already born.

Nor is it at all more reasonable to suppose that the son of the prophet who was not yet born could be the sign here spoken of, because this oracle was delivered, and the whole transaction between Ahaz and Isaiah closed, before mention is made of his birth. And when he was born, he was not called Immanuel, but a name which bares no affinity to it in sense or sound.

It is easy too, to see in what sense the sons of Isaiah were signs to Israel from the Lord of hosts—as they had each of them a name given, significative of God's intention towards the people of Israel. And as it is expressly declared of him who was already born, that he should not arrive to years of dis-

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cretion, and of him who was not yet born, that he should not arrive at the use of speech, before the land should be freed from the incursion of the two kings, who were the present objects of Ahaz's perplexity.

For thus it is written—"Before this child  
 " (the child in his hand) shall know to re-  
 " fuse the evil, and choose the good, the  
 " land shall be delivered from both the kings  
 " whom thou abhorrest;" and again—"Be-  
 " fore this child, the son now to be born,  
 " shall have knowledge to say, My father  
 " and my mother—the same thing shall  
 " happen." What is said here of the second  
 son clearly determines the same sort of ex-  
 pression in the first prophecy, to relate to the  
 first son of the prophet. And the prophecy  
 will then run thus, with the historical cir-  
 cumstances which attend it: "The Lord had  
 " given positive assurance to Ahaz, that the  
 " design of his enemies should not stand nor  
 " come to pass; but reproaches him with  
 " irresolution, and want of confidence in him.  
 " And, to convince him how securely he  
 " might rely upon his protection, proposes  
 " to him to ask a token of his power in any  
 " part of the world; which being obstinately  
 " rejected by Ahaz, the prophet turns from



“ him to the whole house of David, and  
“ expostulates with them upon the incon-  
“ sistency of Ahaz’s conduct in being afraid  
“ of the power of two men, and at the same  
“ time distrusting the power of God: there-  
“ fore (that this house may know how able  
“ the Lord is to protect his people, how  
“ determined to perform the promises he  
“ made to their fathers) the Lord himself  
“ shall give you a sign: A virgin shall con-  
“ ceive and bear a son, butter and honey  
“ shall he eat. ’Till you see this wonder  
“ performed, you may rest assured that  
“ plenty shall remain in your land—and as  
“ to the present fear which the Lord has de-  
“ clared shall not take effect, my infant shall  
“ not be able to distinguish between good  
“ and evil before that shall be wiped away,  
“ and be no more.”

This plain account of the transaction between Ahaz and Isaiah will free us from all the absurdities which have been fixed upon another account, for which the prophet is no more answerable than any man is to another, who either willingly or otherwise mistakes his meaning. This will bring his triumph instantly to an end, where he boasts, “ That  
“ to

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“to suppose the conception of the virgin  
“Mary, and the birth of her Son Jesus literally in view, is contrary to the very intent of the sign, and absurd!” For how could a virgin’s conception seven hundred years afterwards be a sign to Ahaz!

This, you see, has no place when applied to the house of David. That house could and did subsist seven hundred years after Ahaz, and the remains of that house might be capable of receiving the advantage from a fact which would have no being till long after Ahaz’s decease.

We must carry this observation along with us in all cases, where we read that this or that event or emblem shall be a sign unto this or that person, which shall not happen till a generation or two has passed from the time of speaking. The design of all intercourse between God and man is, to keep up amongst men the notion of his power and providence; amongst the Jews particularly as a people. Though the age of man be three score years and ten, yet families, tribes, nations, are not circumscribed within so short a period. The scheme of Providence reaches from the beginning to the end of time; and  
what



what the short date of your time or mine may not allow us to see, may notwithstanding be a monument of God's wisdom and of his power to those who come after us. The declarations in one age may not have their completion in the same.—By this means every generation may receive its proper degree of light, and yet, seeing but in part, must suspend its judgement upon the whole, till all be accomplished. The remoteness of the sign in such a case is no argument against the propriety and the use of it; a sign at seven hundred years distance in the history of the world is no more to be considered as an absurdity, than a sign at seven years distance in the life of a man.

And the force of his other remark vanishes, how useless it was to Ahaz to be told, "That, before a child to be born seven hundred years hence should be able to distinguish, his fear should be at an end;" when it appears that the child of whom this was spoken was born at the time of speaking.

The first point then seems to me to be tolerably clear—that the conception of the Virgin was not intended as a sign to Ahaz,  
and

and that it is not either in grammar or sense applicable to any person in his time.

I will now see how far it is applicable to the case to which it is applied by the evangelist, and to that alone—and of the strength or weakness of this proof for Christianity out of the old Testament, we are well qualified to judge, by having the Old and the New Testament in our hands; the first containing the proofs of Christianity, the latter the application of those proofs, we have nothing more to do than to compare the Old and New Testament together.

We have seen in the prophet an express and literal promise made by God to the house of David, of evidencing his power, and performing his promises to that house, by the conception of a Virgin, who should bear a Son, “whose name should be called Immanuel,” *i. e.* God with us.

We may now turn to the New Testament, and read that “the birth of Jesus Christ was on this manner: When his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. And while Joseph was minded to put her away, the angel of the Lord appeared unto



“ unto him and said, Fear not, Joseph, thou  
“ Son of David, to take unto thee Mary thy  
“ wife, for that which is conceived in her is  
“ of the Holy Ghost, and she shall bring  
“ forth a Son—and she did bring forth a  
“ Son, and he called his name Jesus.”

Or, as it is related by another evangelist—  
“ An angel was sent from God to a Virgin,  
“ espoused to a man whose name was  
“ Joseph, of the house of David, and the  
“ Virgin’s name was Mary; and said un-  
“ to her, Hail, highly-favoured! the Lord  
“ is with thee; blessed art thou amongst  
“ women. Thou shalt conceive and bring  
“ forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus;  
“ he shall be great, and shall be called the  
“ Son of the Highest, and the Lord shall  
“ give unto him the throne of his father  
“ David. Then said Mary, How shall  
“ this be, seeing I know not a man? To  
“ which he answered, The Holy Ghost shall  
“ come upon thee, and the power of the  
“ Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore  
“ also that holy thing which shall be born of  
“ thee shall be called the Son of God. And  
“ it came to pass, that Joseph went up to  
“ Bethlehem the city of David to be taxed,  
“ because

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“ because he was of the house and lineage of  
“ David, with Mary his espoused wife; and  
“ while they were there, the days were ac-  
“ complished that she should be delivered,  
“ and she brought forth her first-born son.”

On this event, wonderful in its circum-  
stances, more wonderful in its effects, the  
Host of Heaven congratulated the inhabitants  
of earth, bringing good tidings of great joy  
to all people; “ For unto you is born this  
“ day in the city of David, a Saviour, which  
“ is Christ the Lord. Glory be to God in the  
“ highest, on earth peace, good-will towards  
“ men !”

On this the heart of good old Simon over-  
flowed with rapture—“ Lord, now lettest  
“ thou thy servant depart in peace, accord-  
“ ing to thy word. For mine eyes have  
“ seen thy salvation, which thou has pre-  
“ pared before all people, a light to lighten  
“ the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people  
“ Israel.”

Let us now draw the prophecy and the  
completion a little nearer together, and see  
in what circumstances they agree.

In the prophecy, a sign is promised to the  
house of David; in the history, Joseph is  
called



called by the angel "Thou Son of David!" Of the child it is said, "that God will give  
"unto him the throne of his father David,  
"and to be born in the city of David;" in  
which city Joseph was taxed, because he was  
of the house and lineage of David.

In the prophecy it is said, "that the Lord  
"himself shall give this sign."

In the history, it is ascribed to the operation  
of the spirit of God, to the Holy Ghost.  
Of the Virgin it is said, "that the Lord is  
"with her, that the power of the Highest  
"shall over-shadow her." And of the child,  
"that the Lord God will give unto him  
"the throne, and that the Lord had pre-  
"pared this salvation."

In the prophecy it is said, "that a Virgin  
"shall conceive." In this case, the history  
is scarce clearer than the prophecy. It is  
said in the prophecy, "that she (the Virgin)  
"shall bring forth a son." The history  
says, that she did do so.

In the prophecy it is said, "that this son  
"shall be called Immanuel; the meaning  
of which is, "God with us." In the histo-  
ry we find the angel's declaration to the vir-  
gin, "The Lord is with thee;" that he was  
called

called "the Son of the Highest, the Son of  
"God, the Saviour, the Salvation of God."

It may be asked, If this prophecy was so plain as you would have us believe, how comes it that the Jews did not as easily discover the sense of it at the time of delivery as any one afterwards? Is not their understanding it in another sense a proof that it had another, and that this which we now give to it is not the original, but a secondary sense?

You shall put the argument contained in this question in as strong a light as you can; and I will answer it by another question, which shall oppose a matter of fact to all that is supposed to be of difficulty in this case. I ask then, When our blessed Lord prophesied expressly to his disciples, "that he should  
"be killed, and after three days rise again," could any thing in words be said more explicit, more plain, than this? And yet did they understand the prophecy? or will it follow from thence, that it was not a literal prophecy?

All arguments therefore arising from its not being understood at first, or since, are nothing. We have the oracle in one hand, and the event in the other; and we are as  
capable



capable of judging as they could be of the first, because we are in possession of the second.

Will it be said, that this prophecy, as it has been said of others, was written after the event? It is not so much as pretended.—It follows then, “ That all this was  
“ done, that it might be fulfilled which was  
“ spoken by the prophet, A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, who shall be called  
“ Immanuel, that is, God with us.”

If the event recorded in this prophecy had been such a one as might be supposed to have taken place in the ordinary course of nature, I own a little more particularity, with respect to time, place, and person, would have been necessary to make out an unexceptionable proof. But as it is a declaration not only of what none but God could know, but also of what none but God could bring to pass; it speaks for itself, and affords the strongest and the fullest evidence, that the God of Israel and the God of the universe, our Creator and our Redeemer, are one.

If it be said, that the event foretold in this prophecy is itself miraculous, and of such a kind, as to depend for its credit upon concurring miracles; and by consequence

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cannot be urged as a proof of Christianity independent of the miraculous proofs by which the truth of that religion is abundantly established, even without the help of this or any other prophecy; I say, this prophecy requires no other miracles to make it a convincing proof of the truth of Christianity, but those only which are necessary to its completion, and to the evidence of its being accomplished: nay, I say farther, that it would have been, though not equally, yet sufficiently satisfactory, if the event contained in it had not been miraculous, supposing the fact to have been as particular, and the proof as plain; the wonderful circumstances being merely accidental, and in no degree necessary to any proof in the prophecy.

It may be urged farther, that God himself has been pleased to decide upon this case, and has given it clearly against this method of argument, and superseded the necessity of any proof from prophecy, when he declares to the Jews by Christ, "That, notwithstanding all their proofs from prophecy, if he had not done amongst them greater works than any other man had ever done, they had not had sin." Neither

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ther does this conclude against us: the case of the Jews every one knows was particular; they were called upon to abandon a religious worship which had been introduced amongst them under the sanction of many wonderful events; and it was most reasonable, that he who pretended to wean them from their ancient practices, derived, as they justly supposed, from God, should proceed upon an authority at least equal to that upon which they had first embraced it.

Miracles therefore, beside that they were one known characteristic of their great Deliverer, were upon the foot of reason absolutely necessary to the conviction of a Jew; but to one under no such circumstances, this single prophecy clearly fulfilled, supposing, too, the event to have been natural, would have been by the concession of our grand adversary sufficient to reasonable conviction. But I have no desire to separate proofs which agree so amicably together, and are undoubtedly stronger for their being united; "what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

Allow me barely to subjoin one practical reflexion.

We see here how the most plain and obvious declarations of God may be made of none effect, when perverted by preconceived opinions of men ; let us learn to submit every judgement of our own to his clear determination ; and though, according to the dictates of human frailty, we might be led to ask, How can this thing be ? let us rather on the better principle of modest piety conclude, “ that with Him all things are possible.” Humility is the gate which leads to all Divine instruction ; them that are meek, “ will he guide in judgement ;” and such as are gentle, them “ will he teach his way.” The haughty Rabbi, the airy infidel, the mystic prelate, may mistake ; but the humble Christian shall know the truth.

Let all our searches after Divine truth be preceded and attended with meekness, with devotion, with prayer, lest that come upon us which is spoken of in the prophets, “ Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish ; for I work a work in your days ; a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.”

SERMON



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S E R M O N XVIII.

*True Notion of Christian Liberty.*

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J O H N vii. 23.

*Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall  
make you free.*

**T**H E words are part of a conversation between our blessed Saviour and the Jews, who were assembled in their temple at Jerusalem.

After he had discoursed with them some time, having answered their repeated questions, and silenced all the scruples they had raised concerning his public character, and the evidence of his mission from God, many of them seem inclined to assent to his discourse; to those therefore he addresses himself directly, and tells them, “ That if they  
“ did but persist in their adherence to those  
“ doctrines, of whose evidence and import-  
“ ance they were now in a great measure

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“ con-

“ convinced, they should be his disciples in-  
 “ deed ; and they should know the truth,  
 “ and the truth should make them free.”

The Jews, who, notwithstanding their particular relation to God, seem to have had no very perfect idea of his dispensations, mistook the matter ; and, conceiving him to speak of national and civil liberty, began to wonder how he could flatter them with the hope of freedom, who did not allow that they had ever yet been slaves. This error of theirs obliged him, in his reply, to explain himself farther : “ You misapprehend me  
 “ quite,” says he ; “ the liberty I propose to  
 “ you is something very different from your  
 “ conception of it ; and how free soever  
 “ you may fancy yourselves in one sense,  
 “ you are far from being so in another and  
 “ better meaning of the word ; for whoever  
 “ committeth sin, is the servant of sin ; it is  
 “ certain from reason and experience, that  
 “ every sinner is a slave.”

The opposition between the son and the servant, in the succeeding verse, is an intimation from a principle of their own law,  
 “ That the Mosaic institution was a tempo-  
 “ rary and imperfect oeconomy ; the Christian



“ perfect and eternal ; that the law given by  
“ Moses was the strength of sin ; but that  
“ grace and truth, which give us the vic-  
“ tory over it, were introduced by Jesus  
“ Christ ;” he concludes, “ therefore, if the  
“ Son shall make you free, you shall be free  
“ indeed.”

Thus much I thought necessary, to shew  
the occasion and scope of the passage, from  
its connexion with the context. I shall  
make no farther preface ; only observe to  
you, that I think myself at liberty to recede  
from the limitation of the words, as they are  
in this case originally applied, and therefore  
are indeed properly and peculiarly applicable  
to the Jews, and shall consider them in their  
universal extent.

The business of this discourse therefore is,  
to evince the certainty in general of what is  
here asserted, “ That whoever continues in  
“ the word of Christ, and is a true disciple  
“ of him, shall know the truth, and the truth  
“ shall make him free.” We shall be better  
able to judge how far continuing in the word  
of Christ may lead a man into the discovery  
of the truth, and how far the knowledge of

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the truth is conducive to human liberty, when we have considered,

First, What is meant by continuing in the Word.

Secondly, What is comprehended under this expression, "of knowing the truth."

And, thirdly, Wherein true liberty consists, or in what sense the knowledge of the truth may be said to make a man free.

We need but cast our eyes a little backward on the circumstances which introduce the words I have chosen for the subject of this enquiry, to inform ourselves particularly what is meant by continuing in the word of Christ.—He had been declaring expressly to the Jews, "That he was sent as a light into  
" the world, for the information and improvement of men; that the Father, by  
" whom he was sent, had himself given an  
" evidence and sanction to the truth of his  
" assertion, which did not rest upon its own  
" authority, by committing the exertion of  
" an unlimited and inimitable power into  
" his hands; that they were inexcusable  
" therefore in shutting their eyes against so  
" clear a manifestation of the Deity, and  
" would inevitably exclude themselves from

" the



“ the hope of that mercy which was offered  
“ by him, unless they could incline their  
“ stubborn hearts to a belief and trust in  
“ him who offered it. What is it then, say  
“ they, that you would have us believe con-  
“ cerning you? The very thing, says he,  
“ that I declared to you from the first, that  
“ I am commissioned from the Father of  
“ truth to guide you into all truth. This  
“ which at present gains but small credit  
“ amongst you, the crucifixion which is rea-  
“ dy to overtake me, and the amazing events  
“ which I tell you before will certainly at-  
“ tend it, shall put beyond doubt, and give  
“ you a full, though late, conviction, that I  
“ have not assumed a fictitious character,  
“ but am in fact what I have all along pre-  
“ tended to be, the Anointed, the Saviour,  
“ the Son of the living God.”

Upon this the historian informs us, “ That  
“ many assented to his declaration; and up-  
“ on their assent he assures them, that if they  
“ continue in his word, *i. e.* in the belief of  
“ that important revelation he had now  
“ made, they should be true disciples of  
“ him, and should know the truth, and the  
“ truth should make them free.”

It

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It is evident, then, that by continuing in the word of Christ is meant, an adherence to that profession to which they had before assented; that Christ Jesus came into the world for the instruction and reformation of men; that he was ordained by the Father of lights to deliver certain truths on earth, which had been hitherto unknown, or imperfectly retained; and consequently, that whatever he delivered was true. Let us see,

Secondly, What is comprehended in the knowledge of the truth, and seek an answer to that question, What is truth? a question that was once left undecided by Him who was the truth itself. The word is made use of in different parts of the Holy Writings, to signify very different things. I shall only take notice of some senses it bears, when it is considered with regard to the revelation of Christ. Sometimes I think it is intended to express no more than the bare truth of this assertion, "That Jesus is the Christ." A sense too restrained to be admitted in this place, because the previous consideration of continuing in the word must at least contain thus much, and the discovery of the truth is  
here



here supposed to be an advantage consequential to such a perseverance.

Sometimes it is expressive of Christianity, as opposed to Judaism; by which it was delineated and figuratively represented, and to which it stands in no nearer respect, than the real person of a man does to his representation. This sense will certainly answer in this circumstance with respect to the people to whom it was addressed; but the word *truth* will bear a more extended one, and is at other times opposed to all false systems of worship and manners, and all erroneous methods of reconciling ourselves to God.—I now look upon it in this more extensive notion of it, and in this view: The truth must consist in a real representation of those objects with which the religion, the virtue, and happiness of men is in any evident degree connected. Under the knowledge of the truth therefore must be comprehended a proper conception of those objects which stand in any visible relation to, or connexion with, our happiness.

The definition of liberty is the third and last thing I proposed, in order to form a distinct judgement of the real import of the passage.

passage. This likewise will admit of different explications, as it is applied by the sacred writers; in its application to the Jews who became proselytes to Christianity, it sometimes implies no more than a freedom from that hard subjection to ordinances not necessary in themselves, which was a yoke too uneasy for them or their fathers to bear. When it is directed to the converts from paganism, it stretches its comprehension to an exemption from all those doubts and uncertainties which are apt to perplex the understanding, and from those impetuous passions and delusive affections which are sure to confine or obstruct the operations of the will. In this last sense, as the passage will allow it, I chuse now to understand it; and when I come to consider it as resulting from the knowledge of the truth, would have it understood to signify, the free exertion and exercise of all the powers of the human soul, not misguided by prejudice, nor disturbed by passion.

Having now explained the terms and determined their sense, the questions that lie between us are,

First,



First, How far the belief that Christ was sent from God, and a dependance on his veracity, will help us to a real representation of the nature of those objects which stand in any apparent respect to our action and happiness?

Secondly, How far the proper conception of those objects which do stand in any visible regard to our action and happiness may conduce to the free exertion and exercise of all the powers of the human soul?

First, I shall enquire how far the belief that Christ was sent from God, and a dependance on his veracity, will help us to a real representation of the nature of those objects which stand in any apparent respect to our action and happiness.

And to this I shall answer, as the great apostle did upon another occasion, "Much, every way;" chiefly, that unto those who depend upon the authority of Christ are committed the oracles of God, those uncorrupted fountains of perpetual truth, those overflowings of Divine favour towards the children of men; in which every thing that relates to our duty, or to our interests, is written in such  
fair

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fair and legible characters, that he who runs may read.

From hence we draw those important discoveries of the Divine nature which were unknown to men, till that beloved Son who was in the bosom of the Father, and to whom only they were known, was pleased to reveal them.

Here we learn to admire and adore that happy and only Potentate, that Lord of all dominion, who alone possesses immortality; who inhabits inaccessible light, undiscerned, indiscernible, by men; who, though far removed from us in his essence, does by his influence surround us all; in whom we live and move, and have our being: not indolent and inactive to neglect, not malicious and revengeful to perplex, the concerns of his creation, he extends his providential care even beneath the minutest affairs of mankind, to the seemingly less important actions of the sensible and inanimate world; that the lilies of the field owe their little honours to his forming hand; that the fall of the meanest sparrow is not disregarded by his observing eye; and that in his book,  
not



not only the lives of men, but the very hairs of their heads, are numbered.

That this paternal affection is not confined to any one sect or nation, but diffused in one common care over all the sons of men. That in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness may be accepted of him. That, in compassion to the miseries of humanity, in the course of his inexplicable providence, he had, from the first stain of evil, from the original defect and corruption of our nature, prepared an antidote, which he did at different times, and in different methods, intimate to our fathers by the prophets; and has now in this last dispensation more fully declared to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed to be our advocate and intercessor, as well as our judge; a judge the more ready to compassionate those infirmities to which he had been subject himself.

Nay, so entirely desirous is this Father of mercies, this God of all consolation, that all men should come to the knowledge of the truth, and attain the possession of eternal happiness, that he does here promise most expressly to send his Holy Spirit to assist our endeavours to attain it.

For

For the Saviour has informed us, that the Father himself will not disdain to be virtually (if not personally) united to the man of an upright heart; to come unto him, and make his abode with him.

This is the description, these the truths, recorded in the holy volume, concerning that High and mighty one, who inhabiteth eternity, on whom our happiness depends.

Let us see now what account it gives us of that happiness itself; how widely different from the received opinions of it!

We usually flatter ourselves with the hope of securing it, by the accumulation of wealth, the acquisition of fame, the increase of knowledge, or the enjoyments of sense.

If we consult the Divine oracles upon each of these heads, we shall find them all exactly weighed and found light in the balance of the sanctuary. We are there advised, if not commanded, to lay up for ourselves treasures, "not on earth, where  
 "moths and rust corrupt, and where thieves  
 "break through and steal," but to amass a better treasure in another place, which can neither be corrupted by time, nor destroyed by violence. We are there not encouraged,  
 if



if not forbid, to buoy ourselves up upon that empty praise of men, which is often ill-grounded, and seldom lasting, which pursues the basest actions, and the worst of men, while it leaves the best in obscurity or disgrace, which extolls a Herod into a god, and calls the Saviour of the world a forcerer and a devil.

Knowledge, indeed, should seem to have a fairer pretence for happiness than either wealth or fame ; but, unless it be founded upon its proper objects, it is as unsatisfactory as either. The idle studies, the empty learning, the vain distinctions of philosophy, falsely so called, are rather the wanderings of our imagination, than the improvement of our understanding ; and however the minds of speculative men may be puffed up with this sort of knowledge, they know nothing yet as they ought to know. When they have attained to the utmost pitch of this world's wisdom, the apostle will tell them, " it is but foolishness with God."

And if neither riches, nor honour, nor science, can entirely constitute human happiness, much less is it to be expected from the more irrational, and less lasting pleasures

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of sense, which, however attracting they may seem in their first allurements, shall in the end bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder.

And, if we give credit to these unerring guides, our fears will appear to be as unreasonable as our desires. Our apprehensions of evil are so strong, that we frequently suffer it before it happens; nay, sometimes that which never does happen. Our very fear of misery creates the pain which never could have existed otherwise; and we endure a more violent sensation from the idea, than we could possibly have suffered from the event. But he “who was a man  
“of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” will tell us (what we should be inclined to think a paradox), “that these light and momentary afflictions will work out for us a  
“far more exceeding and eternal weight of  
“glory. That whom the Lord loveth he  
“chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom  
“he receiveth.” What the world calls affliction, therefore, is to be considered as an instance of Divine affection, the kind severity of an indulgent parent, and the loving correction which may make us great.

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But the most epidemical, as well as the strongest of all our fears, is that of death; a fear which keeps the generality of men all their lives subject to bondage. Will not the sure and certain hope of a resurrection to immortality pull off this dreadful mask? We are convinced from hence, that the only sting of this terrible adversary is sin, and ought to be thankful to that "God who hath given us the victory over it through Jesus Christ our Lord; so that to die to us is gain:" and this seeming conclusion of our existence is more properly to be considered as the beginning of another and a better life, in which, though indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, will be the inevitable lot of every soul that doth evil, yet glory, and honour, and never-ending peace, will be the certain reward of every man who worketh good.

Secondly, This leads us to consider how far the proper conception of those objects, which stand in any apparent respect to our action and happiness, may conduce to the free exertion and exercise of all the powers of the human soul.

From every one of these truths, pursued through their natural consequences, the mind of man may draw constant and fresh supplies towards establishing its perfect freedom.

This amiable representation of the Deity, considered in the endearing relations of the father and friend of men, sets us instantly at liberty from those frightful apprehensions by which *superstition* had so far enslaved the heathen world, as to lay them under the cruel necessity of offering up their sons and daughters to devils; while it encourages us to serve that God who hath delivered us from our enemies *without fear*, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life; freeing us at the same time from the uncomfortable situation of atheistical men, who, while they fancy themselves free under the unknown direction of some fixed fate, or fickle chance, speak indeed great swelling words of vanity, and flatter their followers with the hope of liberty, but are themselves the slaves of corruption.

Still greater degrees of confidence may we draw from the prospect of being finally judged by one, who, having been tried in all the various circumstances of humanity,  
will



will be most ready to afford compassion to men when they shall want it most; a consideration which softens the aspect of the king of terrors, and blunts the points of all the darts of death.

But the most glorious hope arises from that promise, indisputable as to its accomplishment, though inexplicable as to its manner, that the pure Spirit of God shall vouchsafe to reside in our hearts; before him every passion shall fall down, as the idol of Palestine once before the ark of the Lord; for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there must be liberty. He shall convince us of the misery of all selfish views, and shall lead us through all the perplexities of desire and fear, through the restraints of ill-will, of ambition, of avarice, and ungoverned appetite, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

These are the tyrants, this the slavery under which we groan, which chain down the aspiring faculties of the soul, which fasten it to this spot of earth, and hinder us from treading those paths of peace to which celestial wisdom would invite our steps.

Is that man free, rather is he not the worst of slaves, who lives in fear of what may

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happen this moment? or who encourages a desire which may never be accomplished? He, and he only, is truly free, whose happiness rests upon himself, who dreads nothing but the displeasure of his Maker, whose chief wish is to be approved by him.

We boast of our national freedom, and please ourselves with fancying that all the world beside are slaves. What is this boasted freedom? The security of property and person. I allow it to be a blessing; but is the tranquillity of our mind comprehended in that charter? No; we suffer that to lie at the mercy of every invader. A thousand usurpers are exercising a successive tyranny over that better part, depriving us of that dearest of all possessions, the calm possession of our souls.

What tyrant can put us upon so violent a rack as envy does? What inquisition, with all its tortures, can exceed the agony of a revengeful heart? What prison so close and so uncomfortable as that in which avarice pens us up? Will ambition allow us to sleep? or unrestrained will to think? And does not the fear of death keep us in the most wretched captivity all our life?



But an attention to the precepts and an imitation of the conduct of Christ shall change this painful scene! We shall see the envious man pleased with the new sensation of good-will to men; the avaricious wondering at the unusual pleasure of his enlarged heart; the resentful amazed at his own gentle disposition; the ambitious happy in retired content; the turbulent falls of unguided passion subsiding into the more calm and lasting enjoyment of reason and virtue; and the fear of dissolution converted into the chearful hope of immortal life: this is "the liberty wherewith Christ shall make us free."

But can there be no liberty (we shall be apt to ask) while any passion remains? Is life to be so severe, so continued a lesson of mortification, as to be thought a slavery, till we have extirpated all desire? Is God so austere a master, to have placed us in the midst of this delightful garden, and forbid us to taste the fruit of every tree? or to have surrounded us with danger, and not permitted us to be afraid? Are we sent into the world to despise it? to renounce all its advantages, all its honours? And were they made so agreeable to our inclinations, only to make it more dif-

ficult for us to reject them? I say not so; nor does Holy Scripture, so far as I understand it, say any such thing. We are allowed to taste, but not to surfeit. The exertion of all our powers is a duty so evidently incumbent upon us, that we should lose the end of life without it. It is, when unrestrained, the very liberty after which we are enquiring. The passions are no farther to be suppressed than as they restrain those powers; and the due exertion of them does naturally lead us to the esteem of men, and to the real enjoyment of life. Christianity does not tantalize us with the glories of the world. The slavery consists in pursuing them too eagerly, in being impatient at the disappointment, or insolent in the success. To raise ourselves to a still greater ability of doing good, is a laudable ambition; to have our minds prepared to do so, is liberty.

O Liberty! fair child of Truth! necessary result of Divine influence! fruitful parent of internal peace! thou raisest the mind above the tyranny of abject passion; not dissolved in the blandishments of better fortune, not terrified with the frowns of worse; capable of enjoying the blessings of one, incapable of suffering



suffering the injuries of the other; fixed on the immoveable foundation of real virtue; unalterable by any variety of accidental circumstance; stranger to all selfish views; thou extendest thy generous affection through all the charities of each relation; enlarging thy own happiness in the unbounded wish for that of others: by thee, the good man, patriarch, prophet, apostle, martyr, is taught to triumph over poverty, over calumny, over tortures and death; thou ledest him by the hand in humble confidence through the perplexities of this earthly labyrinth; safe under thy conduct, he knows no fear but infamy, and his ruling hope is immortality.

## S E R M O N XIX.

*Prayer an Antidote against  
Temptation.*

MATTH. vi. 13.

*Lead us not into temptation.*

**W**HOEVER reflects seriously upon the number, the variety, and the violence of the temptations which surround us, with the additional force they acquire from the depravity of many, the inattention of most, and the infirmity of all; the little ability we have, and the less inclination, to overcome them; the deceitfulness of sin itself and our own propensity to assist the deceit: whoever, I say, considers this with seriousness and attention, proportionable to the evidence and importance of the truth, will find but too great reason to address himself frequently and fervently to the throne of grace, “that it would please God not to lead him  
“into temptation.”

For



*Prayer an Antidote against Temptation.* 411

For though it be most true, as the Scripture assures us, “that God doth not tempt any man,” that is, that it is inconsistent with the character of a wise and good God, to lay snares and stumbling-blocks in the way of his creatures, to divert them from the paths of virtue, or to seduce them into the road of folly and vice ; yet it is as certain from experience, that temptations must and do come, that there are some temptations which are common to men—temptations to which all mankind are more or less subject, intended indeed not to delude them from their duty, but to confirm them in it.

And though it be advised as matter of Christian perfection by one apostle, “to count it all joy when we fall into various temptations ;” yet it is allowed by another, as a natural effect of human infirmity, to be in heaviness on the same account. And notwithstanding that both these apostles are agreed in the excellent use we may make of temptations, when considered as opportunities of establishing our faith, yet neither of them seem to have been insensible of the danger and hazard that must necessarily attend them, when considered as trials of it.

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412 *Prayer an Antidote against Temptation.*

It was undoubtedly this consideration that induced the innocent and holy Jesus (who was in every circumstance tempted as we are), who could not therefore be ignorant of the danger, tho' he overcame the power of the temptation, to prescribe it as a subject of useful and necessary prayer to God, "that he would not lead us into temptation."

Indeed every object and every circumstance of life may lead us into temptation. Our happiness, as well as our misery, may conspire to tempt us. The blessings of heaven lift us up to presumption; the judgements sink us down to despair. The most agreeable appearances are apt to affect us too strongly one way; the most disagreeable another. Riches are the parents of pride and luxury; poverty of meanness and rapine. Power is allied to insolence and contempt; the want of it to slavery and envy. Company inclines us to levity; solitude to moroseness. Our friendships draw us insensibly to hate those who hate our friends; and our aversions hurry us into the strictest alliance with those who have no other recommendation, but their hatred of the people that we dislike.



*Prayer an Antidote against Temptation.* 413

dislike. Our very tables may be a snare to us; the liquor which refreshes us in one degree, is converted into poison in another; and the food which should have been for our health, becomes too often an occasion of falling. Nay we are sometimes led into temptation by endeavoring to avoid it; and rebound with such violence from one vice, that we are carried quite backward into the opposite extreme. A man may become an infidel to avoid the imputation of credulity; and the abhorrence of avarice has made many a prodigal.

But, besides these natural inducements to evil, there is one more, which gives weight and force to all the rest; the great artificer of fraud, the father of lies, the tempter, the deceiver, the devil. He spreads his nets so artfully that we are fast bound while we fancy ourselves free, and entangle ourselves more by struggling to be loose. He adapts his alluring baits to the taste of the palate he intends to deceive: to the covetous he presents mountains of gold, to the ambitious crowns of honour; he entertains the voluptuous with prospects of pleasure, the indolent and inactive with dreams of ease. He transforms

414 *Prayer an Antidote against Temptation.*

transforms himself into every shape; and assumes any character which may best serve his dark designs. The craft of the serpent shall put on the innocence of the dove. He can clothe himself in the garb of an angel of light, when the mask of virtue may contribute to extend the dominion of vice. He takes the same method to damn men's souls, that the great apostle did to save them. To the Jews he becomes a Jew, that he may deceive the Jews—to them that are without law, as without law, that he may delude those that are without law—to the weak, he becomes as weak, that he may overcome the weak. In short, he makes himself all things to all men, that by any means he may be able to destroy some.

So strongly attacked from without, and so weakly guarded within, we must seek for superior assistance, or inevitably fall into the hand of the enemy. In this most dangerous situation, we may apply almost literally to our own case those emphatical words of the Psalmist—"If the Lord himself were not  
"on our side, if the Lord himself were not  
"on our side, when the tempter rises up  
"against us, he would swallow us up quick,  
"and

*Prayer*

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“ and the stream would run over our soul.  
“ But praised be the Lord, who hath not  
“ given us over for a prey unto his teeth!  
“ Our soul shall escape as a bird out of the  
“ snare of the fowler; the snare shall be  
“ broken, and we shall be delivered.”

There is one duty which seems to be a probable if not a certain method, either to prevent the rise or to suppress the force of these evils. The duty I mean is prayer; which the words themselves, being a form of prayer, seem immediately and naturally to suggest.

I shall, therefore, in the sequel of this discourse, endeavour to evince the reasonableness, the necessity, and the advantage of prayer, as an antidote against the power of temptation; and to press the performance of this duty upon you with all the powerful persuasion of easy and unaffected truth; divested of those illusive embellishments of art and oratory, which are better calculated to amuse the imaginations of men, than to convince their understandings.

It is usual for us, even in the common course of natural affairs, when we are embarrassed or likely to be so in any difficulty, which we are not able by our own strength  
to

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to avert or overcome; it is usual for us, I say, in such a case, to make our application to those whose good-will may incline them to assist us; and who may be capable by their skill to prevent, or by their power to overcome, the distress. And we cannot commend, though we may compassionate, the conduct of those persons, who, either through indolence, or diffidence and despondency, or too great an opinion of their *own sufficiency*, neglect that proper application to others which was absolutely necessary, and might have been entirely effectual to extricate them out of all their difficulties.

Now every one of these qualities, any one of which (singly) might induce us to apply to the person endued with it, in our distress, are all in the most perfect manner united in the character of God. His good-will to us is evident, in that he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. When they are afflicted either by the necessary order of natural causes, or the ill effects of their own imprudence; though he permit them to be grieved in this manner, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. And his knowledge

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knowledge is as extensive as his benevolence; for all things are naked, and open to his eye; from whence it follows that he cannot but *know* how to deliver the godly out of temptation. And his power is also equal to the execution of what his goodness has suggested and his wisdom designed. For the Lord is mighty to save; the Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot redeem; the Lord has *power* to deliver; as he sees clearly the strength of all our trials, and our own inability to support ourselves under them, so he will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, but will with the temptation also (if we make our prayer to him in an acceptable time) find a way for us to escape before the assault be irresistible.

Considering therefore the tender disposition of our kind Creator towards us; his wisdom to discern our difficulties, and his power to divert them; his positive command that we should pray to him, and his express promise to hear our prayers; what folly (to say no worse) shall we be guilty of, if we neglect to seek for that consolation which he assures us we shall find; to

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ask for that help which he informs us we shall receive; and to knock at that door which he has promised to open as a sanctuary in the day of our trial, as a refuge in the hour of distress.

But it must be remembered that our prayer to God to deliver us will avail but little, if we overlook the means of our own deliverance; our prayer that he would not lead us into temptation will have but a poor effect, if in the mean time we run wilfully, or rashly, or carelessly, into it. We pray to God to give us our daily bread: but no man is weak enough to fancy that when his prayer is concluded he has done all that is required of him; no man is vain enough to flatter himself with the hope that he may then sit still, and expect his food from heaven; that the fowls of the air shall supply him with provisions, as they did the fainting prophet; or that they shall descend in a miraculous shower, as they once did in the desert, and obsequiously intrude themselves into his tent, and crowd themselves round about his habitation. Every body sees the folly of so groundless a presumption; but we are not always so quick in discerning  
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the weakness of the other, which if founded to the bottom is equally unreasonable. For sure, one should think it a high degree of extravagance for any man (when he feels the poison boiling in his blood which he has obstinately and greedily imbibed into his veins) to imagine that the wise Contriver and impartial Governor of the universe should engage himself, upon the bare strength of his prayer, in a miraculous interposition, to suppress its operation, and prevent its effect. One cannot but look on it as the height of folly, even to distraction, for any man, who is throwing himself headlong down a precipice, to expect that his supplication shall influence the Deity to give his angels charge over him, that he hurt not his foot against a stone. No man's apprehension is so dull, but he may be sensible at first sight of the extreme weakness and unreasonableness of such suppositions. But we are too ready to throw the imputation of such weakness from ourselves, and fancy that nothing like this can or does ever appear in our own conduct. But alas! it is evident, that something of this kind, and even to this degree, may be observed in the conduct of every sin-

ner : for every deliberate sinner does voluntarily suck that poison into his veins, which must, according to the natural constitution and course of things, corrupt and prey upon his powers, and terminate in his ruin. Every obstinate and head-strong sinner does stand upon the brink of destruction, and wilfully throws himself down a precipice, the fall from which must naturally and necessarily (without straining the figure) dash him against rocks of misery, and plunge him in gulphs of distress.

In short, it appears from these practical observations, that every prayer supposes the earnest endeavour of the person who prays, to avert the evil against which he prays. God, willing and powerful as he is to save, will yet save no man against his will ; whoever would enter into the *strait* gate, must *strive* to do it.

But it may be said, If our endeavours are absolutely necessary to remove those evils, if, notwithstanding all our prayers, they continue in full force, till, by our own resolutions and actions, we have effected their removal, why may not our own resolution and endeavour perform all this without the assistance

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assistance of prayer and supplication at all? What is the advantage of addressing ourselves to heaven in such cases as these? or (to use the words of an ancient writer) “ what profit shall we have if we pray unto him ? ”

Now, in answer to this too common pretence for neglecting our applications to God, it should be observed carefully, in the first place, that God has expressly commanded us to pray upon this very occasion. “ Fast and pray ” (says the Saviour) “ that ye enter not into temptation.” And he affirms as expressly in another place, (speaking of those cruel temptations to which the devil was permitted to subject the people of Judea in his time) that there was no other means of being freed from them but by prayer and fasting. This kind of affliction and trial, says he, is not to be eradicated but “ by prayer and fasting.”

It is evident, therefore, that God has commanded us to pray to him *particularly* in circumstances of trial and distress; and it is as clear, that he has promised to hear and to answer the prayers we put up to him in our difficulties of this kind: for the friendly and faithful Jesus assures us, “ That if we will

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“ask, we shall have; if we will seek, we shall  
“find; if we will but knock, the door shall  
“be opened unto us.” And one of his  
apostles tells us, “That the prayer of faith  
“shall save the sick; that the earnest and  
“intense prayer of a just man has a prevail-  
“ing influence, even to remove the difficul-  
“ties of another person;” and if so, certainly  
it cannot be less effectual to remove those  
under which he labours himself.

Since then we are obliged by the express  
command of God, and encouraged by his  
positive promise, to offer up our prayers to  
him in all cases of trial and difficulty, it will  
be vain in any man to plead in excuse for the  
neglect of this duty, that he could not disco-  
ver the manner in which the assistance should  
be conveyed to man, nor the method in  
which it should operate to his relief. This  
would be as ridiculous, as if a man should  
neglect to observe the prescription of a skil-  
ful and experienced physician, only because  
he could not acquaint himself with the na-  
ture of his medicine, nor conceive by *what*  
*means* it would produce its effect. Nay, it  
would be so much more ridiculous, as the  
utmost art of man can only extend itself to  
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the discovery of means which may attain their end in some cases only, and in a particular conjuncture of things; but the directions of God, when justly observed, must be effectual at all times, and in every case; they must be infallible and universal.

But it may be urged farther, that though we have prayed with great sincerity and attention, and have exerted our endeavours for the prevention or removal of these evils, yet neither the sincerity of our prayers, nor the exertion of our other endeavours, have been able either to prevent or remove them.

All this I grant may be in a great measure true; but this argument can no more authorize our desisting from prayer, than the other could our entire omission of it. For we are not only commanded to pray, but to *continue* earnest in prayer, and not to faint or despair because we do not immediately perceive the success of it. And though the Saviour condemns and disapproves the conduct of those who were weak enough to imagine that they should be heard for the multiplicity of their words, yet he recommends and encourages (if he does not command) an importunity in prayer, in that para-

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ble, where he represents the success of it upon a magistrate who had no regard for the good of his fellow-creatures, nor reverence for the glory of his Creator. And indeed to desist from praying, purely because we do not immediately perceive the visible effects of our prayers, is contrary to what we do in the most common affairs of life. No man throws aside the use of a medicine (which he is *assured* will be effectual) because he does not find that it has instantly effected his recovery. If he find but a little relief from it at present, it encourages his hope to persevere in the repetition of it till it has absolutely perfected the cure.

But to give the objection its utmost extent, and put it in its full force, let us suppose that there may be cases in which no prayer, nor any endeavour, can totally remove the temptation; I allow that there may happen cases of this kind, where the temptation may either be so involved in the very frame and constitution of our nature, or so annexed to other concurring circumstances of our external condition, that no efforts we can make shall ever be able absolutely to dissolve it. But then I say, that even in this  
case



case (which is the strongest that can be supposed) we are still under the same, the very same, obligations to pray, and to make use of all other probable means to remove the temptation, as in any other case whatever, as will appear to every man who gives a proper attention to the truth of these following observations.

First, then, It must be observed, that though we admit it to be possible, and even allow it to be true, in fact, that some particular men may labour under grievous temptations, which, from their original adherence to their natures, or from their inseparable connexion with their circumstances, cannot ever in the natural course of things admit of a removal; yet no man can possibly be certain that this is his own case, nor ought ever to presume it to be so: for we find, by experience, that in the most common cases of natural infirmity, we often take those wounds to be mortal, and those diseases to be incurable, which yet, by proper care and application, do in many instances admit of a happy cure and perfect recovery.

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Secondly,

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Secondly, It should be observed farther, and most carefully remembered, that God's command to us that we should pray to him in cases of temptation, and his promise to assist those who do so, is not limited, but universal and without exception. As the command therefore is universal, so should the act of obedience be, and so most certainly the assistance will.

Prayer therefore is still necessary, and will be effectual to relieve us under our trial, though it may not in some cases be equally so to remove it from us. Now if it be evident, that prayer will in all cases take away from the force of the temptation, and abate the edge of our trial, by removing part of our pain, tho' in some circumstances it may be impossible, and in others improper, to remove the whole, there is sufficient ground for every reasonable man to call upon the Lord *in his trouble*, who will undoubtedly "hear his cry, and will help him." And this, too, is exactly conformable to what we usually do in matters that relate to our health. For though a man labour under a distemper which is by all men, and by himself, considered as incurable, he does not immediately  
determine



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determine to lay aside the use of all medicines, but is glad to apply such as may afford him some small comfort, some short respite from his pain, and is pleased to find, that by such helps he can make that condition barely tolerable, which he knows it is not in his power absolutely to remove.

This was the case of that great apostle St. Paul, when he was pressed by that heavy and irremoveable temptation, which he represents under those strong expressions of “a thorn in his flesh, and a scourge of the tempter.” He did not argue (as inconsiderate men are too apt to do) that the hope of removing it was absurd, and that it would be in vain for him to pray for its removal. On the contrary, he made his earnest supplication to God, with whom he knew all things were possible; nor did he despair upon the ill success of his first address, but *thrice* he besought the Lord. He continued to repeat his supplication till he received this answer, “That it was not proper, indeed, to remove it entirely; but that God’s favourable assistance should be sufficient for him;” which evidently implied the necessity of continuing in prayer, even after he knew  
that

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that the evil, against which he prayed, could not be removed. For we all know, that the favour of God is not to be obtained without our prayer for it, because God does not give the assistance of his Holy Spirit but to *those who ask* it. The impossibility then of removing an evil by prayer, even when it is known (which it never can certainly be by us), is so far from being an objection against the use of prayer, that it is perhaps one of the strongest arguments for it; and to neglect praying for assistance to support us under an evil which cannot be removed, would be a weakness like to that of a little state, which, being surrounded with a powerful enemy, should refuse to call in such assistance, and to make such provisions as were necessary to obstruct the incursions of the enemy, because it despaired of being able totally to defeat him.

Let us, therefore, when we are closely surrounded by these thorns in the flesh, or when we are pressed by the cares of the world, which are also in the language of the scripture represented as thorns, offer up our prayers to the wise, and kind, and powerful God, “ who will not suffer us to be tempt-

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“ed above what we are able to bear,” and whose favour we shall find to be sufficient for us ; sufficient to resist and finally overcome those temptations, which at present it may either be impossible or improper to remove.

I shall conclude the whole with two reflexions, which shall neither be so long as to take up much of your time, nor, I hope, so tedious as to tire your patience.

First, Since it appears from the preceding observations, that almost every object is capable of exciting in men some irregular desire, or awakening some irrational fear, it follows that the temptations to which human nature is liable are as numerous as the objects which surround it, and the passions to which it is subject. Now as there is no man who is exempt from the power of every passion, so there is hardly any that is subject to the dominion of all. Some passions are in their very essence so directly contrary to each other, that one would think it impossible for the same breast to be under the influence of both. But in the constitution of every mind, we may generally observe some one passion to have the ascendant, which

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which (like Moses's serpent) controuls and swallows up all the rest. In subordination to this, all the inferior affections apply their proper acts, which, like a hidden spring, informs and actuates the whole machine. Nay, it even adopts passions contrary to the natural turn of the mind, and inconsistent with each other, when they can be subservient to the propagation of its main design. You shall see the same man disposed to clemency or cruelty, to parsimony or prodigality, to arrogance or affability, to temperance or excess, as any or all of these different dispositions may contribute most to the indulgence of his *favourite* affection.

It is the business, therefore, of every wise man, to examine into the most violent bent of his own heart, and to be most upon his guard against that prevalent inclination which most easily invades him. This is the principle that must be eradicated; this is the passion that will absolutely govern, if it be not absolutely governed. To correct the lesser desires, while this predominates, is little more than pruning the branches, which will soon shoot out again while the trunk remains; it is only to suppress a few little heats,



heats, which will instantly return while the disease is in the blood.

Second and last observation. I have hitherto recommended prayer to you, barely on account of that Divine assistance which we may certainly expect from the explicit promise of God on the performance of his express command. But since there are now so few genuine children of that father of the faithful who durst follow his Maker without knowing whither he went, since the generality of mankind are inclined to walk by sight and not by faith, I shall now make it appear that prayer is in its own nature admirably adapted to suppress the impetuosity of passion, and to subdue the violence of temptation.

“Sunt verba & voces, quibus hunc lenire  
“dolorem

“Possis, & magnam morbi deponere partem\*.”

Whatever was the original and superstitious intention of this sentiment, sure, if it was ever applicable to any one thing in the world, it is literally so to prayer; for there is a kind of natural and powerful charm in the very act of prayer, which soothes the impulse of the most pressing pas-

\* Εισιν τ'επώδαι και λούων θελητηρια.

sion, and abates the violence of the most urgent pain. When a man prostrates himself before that discerning Mind, who sees every motion and disposition of his soul, the most impetuous passion will not dare to raise its head; it will subside insensibly, and sink into inaction. This will give him time to recall his reason, to recollect his strength. His inclinations will by this means constantly lose ground, and, by being often repulsed, will at length be entirely defeated.

A man cannot pray to God to free him from the dominion of his passions, without wishing to be free, without resolving to free himself. And it is on our weakness that they found their strength, 'tis to our willing captivity that they owe their easy conquest: we might soon put an end to that slavery, if we did but heartily wish for freedom. A small degree of honest resolution would dissolve the charm. We may truly say of our desires, as the Saviour did of him who loves to foment them, "Resist the passion, and it shall flee before you."

A man cannot pray against an evil, without considering the causes which excite, and the circumstances which encourage it. And to be ignorant of the nature of one's complaint,



plaint, is very often the occasion of prolonging and increasing it; but to know the cause of a disorder, has been always esteemed a very considerable step towards the cure of it.

In short, a man cannot pray for the removal of an evil, unless he has some hope that it may be removed. Now the very distrust of our own power is often the very reason of our inability. If we could but persuade ourselves that a thing were possible to be done, we should many times be able to effect it. Despair enervates the faculties, and makes that impossible to us which in itself is not so. But hope is of a quite contrary complexion, and superinduces an accession of power to our natural strength. His very hope then shall insure his victory, he shall go forth conquering and to conquer.

Let us now look back upon the difficulties with which we must unavoidably engage, from the world, the tempter, and ourselves. The world is made up of snares for those that are innocent; of baits for those who are not so: every thing we love, every thing we hate, is capable of throwing some unhappy bias upon the mind; and that fa-

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ther of mischief, who is represented as a roaring lion seeking what he may devour, has as many devices to turn the things which are innocent, and those which were intended to be useful, to our destruction.

Besides these, there is a nearer enemy, whom you fear less perhaps, but have not less reason to fear, that treacherous inmate, yourself.

All the allurements of the world, all the illusions of the tempter, might be repelled, if we could but securely rely upon ourselves. For this reason we are called upon by the nature of our situation, as loudly as by the voice of our Redeemer, to *watch*, to *strive*, to *fight*, to *wrestle*, nay, *earnestly to contend*.

The gospel deals plainly with us, and confirms every determination of our experience, when it represents our state as a *warfare*; when it compares the conflict with our passions, to the racking operations of cutting off a right hand, of tearing out a right eye; when it figures us as in a *race*, and that towards a *high place*, before we can arrive at which all our spirits must be exerted, and every nerve be strained.

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It is not enough that we rouse ourselves once, and then sink into inactivity; we must look upon ourselves as persons who are *swimming upwards against a rapid stream*; every stroke we miss, will make two more necessary. There can be no resting in the case; we must advance continually, or be hurried back for ever. Our strength will be exhausted, and the way made longer, by remissness.

As our care must be perpetual, it should be universal too; you would follow your Redeemer, no doubt, where the road is smooth; when it grows rugged and tedious, you would stop short and forsake him; you would compliment your master with doing so much of his service as costs you no trouble; and where that begins your religion ends; that is, you generously renounce those vices to which you have no propensity, but throw the rein upon the neck of those passions which solicit you with pleasure.

Is this the result of your christian warfare, to make gallant shew and promise of courage, when no enemy appears; to turn your back on the first alarm of his approach? Is this a struggle deserving that high

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prize which is reserved only for those who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality?

Do you call this subduing your passions, to change a vice which is worn out, and you are tired of, for one that is more agreeable to you, and has novelty to recommend it?

You may as well call it temperance, not to be sober, but to be intoxicated only with the liquor which you like.

And is this the method of reconciling yourself to your Maker, by corresponding only with that part of his enemies to which you have no particular aversion? It is absurd, it is impracticable; you cannot divide yourself between God and any of your inclinations. He admits of no competitor; and if you give him not all your heart, and all your soul, he will accept of none of it.

Reflect awhile, and recollect the different apprehensions of mind you have felt, when you have manfully subdued all your passions, or suffered yourselves tamely to be brought into subjection to any of them.

How agreeable, how delightful, how big with extacy, is the thought of being just  
now



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now (let what will happen) within reach of that triumphant expectation, excited by that most encouraging declaration of the Saviour, "To him who overcometh will I give to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

The possession of all this world, with all its visionary, sickly, unsteady honours, is not worthy to be compared with the real, substantial, and permanent satisfaction, which that single reflexion can afford to a mind looking down upon this dirty spot, soaring up on the wings of devotion to the realms of light, and laying hold on a crown of immortality.

Think again; look back into your hearts, and call to remembrance the fear, the shame, the horrible forebodings of guilt which sat heavy on your soul, when conscious of having deserted the standard of your Master, of having declined the conflict in which he triumphed!

Intolerable! insupportable thought! which nothing can exceed but the actual torments of devoted souls, which nothing can alleviate but the healing sacrifice of a contrite heart.

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You know your danger, you know your dependence; it rests on the aid of that pervading Spirit, the Illuminator, the Comforter of holy souls, under the auspicious banner of that Captain of your salvation (who encourages by his example what is enjoined by his command) in whom you shall have peace. In the world you must meet with temptations; but be of good cheer, not doubting that ye shall, through him, as he did of his own strength, overcome the world.

SERMON



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S E R M O N XX.

*Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.*

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LUKE xvi. 25.

*Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things. But now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

**T**HIS sentence, I need not tell you, is taken out of one of the most striking parables of the gospel. The parable is addressed by our blessed Lord to the Pharisees, whose character in it is, that they loved money, but neglected the proper use of it.

The very end and design of this parable, therefore, is, to teach those who abound in wealth in what manner they ought to apply some part of it, at least, by shewing them what will be the dreadful, the una-

voidable, and the irreverfible confequence of mifapplying it.

Whoever fupposes it to be a rude undiftinguifhing fatire upon thofe who are poffeffed of large eftates is miftaken, both in the difpofition of the bleffed Author of this inftruction, and in the intent of the inftruction itfelf; which is plainly calculated, not as an infult upon men of great fortunes, but as an admonition to thofe who have great fortunes indeed, but little minds, to enlarge their hearts with their eftates.

Let men be as rich as they will, provided their humanity and benevolence bear a juft proportion to their wealth. It is a notion as wild as it is uncharitable, to fancy that it is literally impoffible for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. The rich man here condemned is condemned for his luxury and inhumanity; but if there be others as rich as, but more humane and charitable than, he was, we may be affured that fuch men are as far from this man's condemnation, as they have been from his character.

I will give you fome account of this man, as it may be collected from this representation



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sentation of him in the gospel, that, by avoiding his conduct, you may avoid his punishment. He was rich—by inheritance is not said, or by his own acquisition—probably by both, for we find that he had five brethren, who are all represented as in the same case with himself. But by which soever of these ways he became rich—there is yet no harm done; if by his own industry, the man was to be commended; if by descent—who can blame him?

But he lived and dressed with state and delicacy; he was cloathed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously—and this not occasionally and by accident, but it was his manner and custom of life—he did it every day.

In this perhaps you may think he carried the matter too far; an interval now and then of fasting and sackcloth might have happily interrupted the luxury of his table, and the elegance of his dress. However, even this will admit of some excuse; it contributed to the circulation of money. The tradesman probably was the better, and the man himself, if he did it upon that consideration, possibly, not much worse.

But

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But there was an object of charity who lay at his door; his name was Lazarus, and his condition corresponded with his name. He had no patron but Providence. This man, poor and helpless, and full of ulcers, lay at the rich man's door. He could hardly be a stranger to his misery and necessity—we are assured, from the sequel of the story, that he was not; for as soon as he saw him, but afar off in another place, where it was more convenient for him to be acquainted with him, he knew him at first sight—he lost no time in seeking his acquaintance—he cried out, “Father Abraham, send Lazarus.”

This very Lazarus is now begging to be fed—with what? not with the sumptuous dishes that adorned his board—of these, 'tis likely, he hardly knew the names! not with the food which regaled the haughty master—nor even with the fragments which surfeited his pampered servants—but with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table! This was no sturdy beggar; nothing could be more modest than this request. His modesty, however, had as little effect as his poverty or his wounds; neither the lord  
nor



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nor his retinue supplied him with any relief, or so much as recommended him to an infirmary. Nay more—the very dogs came and licked his wounds! was this, by an office of tenderness, to reproach the hard-heartedness of their master, or, in imitation of his inhumanity, to fall upon him as their prey?

Worn out at last with poverty and pain, he sunk into that sure refuge of the miserable, where the wicked cease from troubling, where the weary be at rest—he died—and, by the silence of the historian, we may fairly suppose, was thrown aside without any other care, than what was convenient for the ease of those who survived him. So inhuman a disposition, as this conduct towards Lazarus discovered in this rich man, would have been inexcusable in a heathen; doubly so in one who lived under a written law of God. For this man is supposed to have been a son of Abraham, a Jew, subject consequently to the force and penalty of a statute which he acknowledged to be divine, by which it was expressly enacted, Deut. xv. 7, 8. “If there be among you a poor  
“of

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“ of thy gates, in the land which the Lord  
“ thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not  
“ harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand  
“ against thy poor brother. But thou shalt  
“ open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt  
“ surely lend him sufficient for his need in  
“ that which he wanteth.”

By this institute, you see, the poor amongst the Jews became an essential part of their retinue to the rich. They came recommended by God, who declared that they should never cease out of the land; that the reciprocal duties of charity and humility, of benevolence, on both sides, might be kept up for ever—therefore I command thee, saying, “ Thou shalt open  
“ thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy  
“ poor and to thy needy in thy land.” The poor, under this oeconomy, had as good a right to what the rich could conveniently spare, as he himself could have to what he could properly enjoy.

This right the rich man in the parable withheld—he sacrificed to his vanity, the health, the ease, the life of the poor—the curse of him that was ready to perish came upon him—and all his wealth could not retrieve



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trieve from, perhaps hastened him to, the grave. Thither let us follow him. The same pomp which gave the colour to his life, attended his exit also; for the rich man died, and was buried. In this too he was distinguished from Lazarus. Here no expence was wanting, to represent the inexpressible concern of the person who succeeded him in his estates, who was undoubtedly too much affected to attend to any thing but the will of the deceased. Nor could there be wanting some friendly priest to dress out the funeral oration, some favourite poet to adorn the monumental brass with a long catalogue of all his virtues, particularly his benevolence and his bounty.

Here was an end of the poor man's patience, and of the rich man's pleasure. God took the poor man first, to remove him from the inconvenience of the present life. To the rich man he gave longer time, that he might not want opportunity to shake off his attachment to this, and prepare himself for the account to be given in another life.

You have heard what happened to them here; our blessed Lord has been pleased to draw the curtain, and shew us them in very  
different

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different circumstances hereafter. After he was dead, the poor man was carried by angels—the host of heaven were stationed to receive him, and to bear him on joyful wings to the place which had been prepared for him—they carried him to Abraham's bosom. The father of the faithful, moved with compassion at the long sorrows of his son, received him into his bosom. He whom we saw cast out at the rich man's door, is now placed nearest to the king, at the marriage-feast of his son. He who had imitated Abraham's faith, was now partaking the reward of Abraham.

With the rich man too, the scene was changed. Instead of being cloathed with purple and fine linen, he is exposed naked to the flames. Instead of faring sumptuously, he consumes with drought ; if Lazarus begged in vain for crumbs of meat, so does he now for one drop of water. In hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments. And to increase his torment, at a distance and in a happier place, the first object he knows is Lazarus. That Lazarus who was not admitted to partake with his dogs, is now feasting with angels and with Abraham.

Unhappy



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Unhappy man! Not one of thy purple friends, not one of thy haughty family, not one of thy numerous servants, to attend thee now. What wretched company hast thou kept on earth, that thou art not able to find out one of them in heaven? Too just judgement of an avenging God, to make thee beg relief of the very wretch to whom thou hadst denied it! to make thee ask in vain as he did! "Send Lazarus, father Abraham, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame."

To be sunk down from plenty to absolute want, from the highest pomp to the most abject beggary; to see those who were lately dependent upon you exalted in an instant above you, and yourself reduced to a state of dependance upon them; would raise a hard struggle even in a good mind, and prove an insupportable trial to a bad one.

To be reduced by your misery to ask for help, to be condemned for your punishment to be refused it! Yet this hard case is the rich man's case; he is forced to seek for succour  
of

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of the last person in the world to whom he would chuse to be obliged, and has the mortification not to succeed in his request. For what says Abraham? "Son, remember  
 " that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy  
 " good things, and likewise Lazarus evil  
 " things—but now he is comforted, and  
 " thou art tormented."

Is prosperity then a crime, and is a man to be punished in the next world, merely because he is prosperous in this? or are the sufferings of one man to be placed to the account of another? and am I to be condemned because you are unfortunate? Neither. Prosperity is then only culpable, when it is unsocial and selfish; and we are then only accountable for the misfortunes of others, when we withhold the relief which they want, and we can give.

This was the crime of the person before us; this was his condemnation: not simply because he had received his good things in his life-time, but because he rioted in them without any thought of the next. Not because Lazarus had his evil things, but because his evils were increased by the closeness of this man's hand and the hard-



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ness of his heart. "But now he is comforted;" according to the exactest notions we have of the Divine justice, who inflicts penalties upon his faithful servants, in order to increase their happiness by the trial of their faith; and in consequence of his express promise, "That the needy shall not always be forgotten, the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever."

"And thou art tormented." This is the *last* effort of God's severity, upon those who oppress his servants, and abuse the trust which he has reposed in them. And this too corresponds exactly with his express denunciation. "He loved cursing, so let it come unto him; he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him; because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart."

And the torments here described are not only represented as insupportable, and such as would not admit of the slightest mitigation; not *one drop of water* to cool his tongue; but such too as would admit of no release, from which there could be no redemption; for between the good and bad,

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the happy and miserable, a great gulph is fixed, so as to allow no communication between the separate states.

You have seen this man's fate, you have heard the cause of it; he squandered away in luxury what was intrusted with him for the poor. By his want of compassion to his fellow-creature, he excluded himself from the mercies of God; he involved himself in misery, which can neither be described nor conceived; for the torments of hell are in that respect like the happiness of heaven, "such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." They are insupportable, they are unintermitting, they are endless. "Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?" If you shudder at the penalty, you must avoid the crime.

These poor children are now to you what Lazarus was to the rich man in the parable: they are helpless, and laid at your door; they call upon you for relief; they ask not to be admitted into your houses, to be seated at your tables; they desire only the crumbs that fall from your table. A part of your superfluity will satisfy all their desires; can  
you



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you harden your hearts, can you shut your ears, and close your hands, at their petition? Think not of this world and its vanity too much; give up some idle fashion, some hurtful diversion, some pernicious pleasure, to the prospect of eternity. Take heed how you despise one of these little-ones. A greater than I has told you, that their angels continually behold the face of our heavenly Father; angels who are ready to carry them from all the hardships and injuries they may suffer from you, to a place of happiness and honour, even to Abraham's bosom.

But if that should happen to them through your uncharitableness, think what must become of you! "Son, remember," said Abraham. Dreadful recollection! Let me teach you a more useful lesson. Look beforehand; think what will be the consequence, and think to prevent it. Your piety and your alms may now prevent those tortures, which no after-tears or prayers can abate.

If you would have been condemned for want of charity under the law of Moses, how much more will you be culpable under

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the gospel of Jesus Christ! You have now the very request which the rich man made in vain granted unto you, which he thought sufficient to prevent his brethren from falling into that place of torment.

You hear in this parable the very account which Lazarus would give you, if he were to return from the dead; of the miseries which are reserved for luxury and uncharitableness in another life: "Nay, father Abraham, says he, but if one went from the dead, they will repent." They will no longer go on in a course which they know must lead to the chambers of death.

You have now that very favour vouchsafed to you which was refused to them; one who has returned from the dead is now instructing you, even Christ Jesus, who is the resurrection and the life. He speaks to you by his apostles and ministers, charging them that are rich in this world, that they be "ready to give, and glad to distribute; laying up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may inherit eternal life."

"Make



“ Make therefore to yourselves friends  
“ of the mammon of unrighteousness, that  
“ when ye fail, they may receive you into  
“ everlasting habitations.”

In a word, let the poor learn piety and patience, from the lot of Lazarus; let the great avoid luxury and inhumanity, from the rich man's doom. You see from this very case, that uncharitableness of itself (for the person here represented is not charged with any other crime) is sufficient to exclude you from the kingdom of heaven, and bring you into the place of torment.

All other pretences to religion are vain, unless you have that belief which operateth by love. It is an idle dream to suppose that any distinction you enjoy above other men will be in the least regarded before God; for he seeth the heart, and will judge you by your heart.

Riches are a present blessing, and may contribute to a greater blessing hereafter; if you employ them to promote justice, and peace, and happiness in the world. But if you forget the God who gave them, and the ends for which they were given; if in

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your life-time you expend every thought how you shall amuse yourself only with these good things, to the exclusion of the poor and him that hath no helper, beware, lest ye also come into this place of torment.

Lastly, this man was a son of Abraham; descended from that father of the faithful to whose seed the promises were made; but he forfeited his privileges by his ill conduct. If he had been indeed a son of Abraham, as our Saviour divinely argues, he would have done the works of Abraham. The only relation that will be acknowledged by Abraham is, to resemble him in his works; in his trust in God, in his hospitality and bounty to his fellow creatures: “for many  
“shall come from the east and west, and sit  
“down with Abraham in the kingdom of  
“God, while the children by inheritance  
“shall be cast into outer darkness; there  
“shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Neither let us value ourselves, as they did, on the externals of religion, for the kingdom of God is within us; 'tis charity and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. If you would lay hold of the glorious promises of  
Christianity,



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Christianity, take heed that ye adopt not the manners of heathens; consider all the advantages of this life, merely as means to lead you to the lasting happiness of another; and, to use the nervous expression of an apostle, “let us count them all as dung, “ that we may gain Christ, and live with “ him in his kingdom for ever and ever.”

## CONCIO AD CLERUM.

MATT. X. 34.

Μη νομισῇτε ὅτι ἦλθον βαλεῖν εἰρήνην ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν·  
 οὐκ ἦλθον βαλεῖν εἰρήνην, ἀλλὰ μαχαίραν.

*Ne arbitremini quod venerim ad mittendum  
 pacem in terras; non veni ut mitterem  
 pacem, sed gladium.*

**N**ON verba Christi audire videmur,  
 Fratres verendi, ex Evangelio, sed  
 Mahommedis ex Alcorano deprompta! Hæc-  
 cine mitis illius, benevoli, placidissimi Serva-  
 toris declaratio? nonne potius sævientis ty-  
 ranni, latronis, homicidæ comminatio? Nun-  
 tiumne sonat vox ista Dei annuntiantis pa-  
 cem, salutem prædicantis? annon angeli  
 percussoris stricto gladio humani generis ex-  
 cidium meditantis? Parum fanè concordat  
 hæc denunciatio cum eis de Messiah vati-  
 ciniis (apud Judæos olim editis) quæ mi-  
 ram pacem rerumque tranquillitatem in reg-  
 no ejus futuram adnuntiaverint, quæ multa  
 & præclara de principe pacis, sint pollicita,  
 cujus



cujus imperii & tranquillitatis nullum fore  
finem prædixerunt, juxta illud vivis colo-  
ribus, a vate depictum, “ Habitabit lu-  
“ pus cum agno; & pardus cum hædo ac-  
“ cubabit; vitulus, & leo, & ovis simul mo-  
“ rabuntur, & puer parvulus terrebit eos;  
“ vitulus & ursus pascent simul, simul re-  
“ quiescent catuli eorum. Et leo cum  
“ bove paleas comedet; et delectabitur in-  
“ fans ab ubere super foramine aspidis, &  
“ in cavernam reguli qui ab lactatus fuerit  
“ manum suam mittet. Non nocebunt,  
“ neque occident in universo monte sancto  
“ meo, quia repleta est terra scientiâ Domini,  
“ sicut aqua cum inundat mare.” Et illud  
ejusdem, “ Ecce servus meus; suscipiam eum,  
“ electus meus complacuit sibi in illo anima  
“ mea, non clamabit nec audietur vox ejus  
“ foris; calamum quassatum non conteret,  
“ & linum fumigans non extinguet; non  
“ erit tristis neque turbulentus.”

Hæ vaticinationes modestum proculdubio  
& submissum, & mansuetum Christi inge-  
nium exhibent, & egregiam reipublicæ Chris-  
tianæ felicitatem cum isthæc venerit aptissimè  
depingunt; hæc ut adveniat quotidianis  
precibus etiamnum Deum fatigamus, vereor

ne quotidianis litibus, quo minus adfit, impediamus.

Jesu interim divino afflatu percitus, hominum & dæmonum malitiam animo præci-  
piens, & quantam malorum oppugnationem  
experturi essent qui evangelii doctrinam ani-  
mose publicarent, non propositum suum  
(illius enim omnia consilia & vota ad pa-  
cem & concordiam spectabant) sed eventum  
solummodo declarat; “non veni pacem  
“ missurus, sed gladium.”

Sensu igitur eventuali, quem vocant, ac-  
cipienda sunt hæc Christi verba; & ita de-  
mum intellectis, totum illud quicquid erat,  
primo intuitu, repugnantiae in illis ab in-  
genio & regno Christi a prophetis olim ad-  
umbrato, propius intuenti, vanescit prorsus;  
& vaticinatio abhinc nova oritur mentem  
Jesu divinitus insitam clarissimis prodens  
indiciis, & veritatem evangelii unice illu-  
strans. In hunc ergo modum cœlestem il-  
lum Monitorem discipulos allocutum suos  
crediderim: “Vosmet ipsos miserè decipiitis,  
“ focii, si a tempore adventûs mei (in terras)  
“ Christianam fidem profitentes perpetuæ  
“ quietis & terrenæ felicitatis potituros spe-  
“ raveritis; e contra, mihi credite, meque  
“ &



“ & vos in ipso limine annuntiationis nostræ  
“ persecutioni crudelissimæ obnoxios fore; &  
“ evangelii professionem maximas sæpe, pro  
“ variis temporibus, calamitates secum alla-  
“ turam; adeo ut alii cruce, igne alii, alii  
“ denuo gladio pereatis! En spei vestræ  
“ primitias! En Christianæ fidei opima spo-  
“ lia! Nec Judæos qui nos persecuturi sunt,  
“ fors melior manet; ipsi enim qui primum  
“ contra nos gladio fuerint usi, gladio plec-  
“ tentur. Instat tempus cum Judæorum  
“ universa gens pœnas crudelitatis erga me &  
“ vos miserrimas luet, gravissimâ obruenda  
“ ruinâ. Quinetiam antiquâ istâ gente tan-  
“ dem a stirpe evulsâ, aliarum nationum im-  
“ peratores contra Deum surgentes, & Chris-  
“ tum ejus iis qui cultui a me præscripto  
“ adhæserint, convicia, calumnias, crimina,  
“ supplicia, & mortis omne genus infontibus  
“ injicient. Postremò (frequentissima religi-  
“ onis meæ effecta) evangelii prædicationem  
“ plerumque sequentur contentiones, lites,  
“ & certamina inter conjunctissimos antehac  
“ amicos, qui nomen meum præ se ferentes  
“ a mente præceptorum meorum alieni se  
“ invicem convitiis laceffent, & alii in alios  
“ sævientes ad pœnas & supplicia reposcent;  
“ propter

“ propter varias de doctrinâ meâ sententias,  
 “ obliterati νόμος τε βασιλική, quæ comitatem &  
 “ amorem mutuum præ scientiam quamlibet,  
 “ præ fidem, præque omnia ponit.” Atque  
 hæc omnia quæ a Christo tam aperte fue-  
 rint prædicta ad unum prout prædixerat  
 evenisse liquet.

I. Ex eis, quæ tum ipse vivens morien-  
 que tum discipuli qui illi proximè succeffe-  
 runt perpeffi sunt.

II. Deinde ex eis quæ cælitus immiffæ sint  
 (haud ita multo post) in Judæos incredulos  
 poenæ.

III. Præterea e persecutionibus, cruciati-  
 bus variis, martyriis quibus primi veteris ec-  
 clesiæ antistites vexati non dejecti succre-  
 verunt.

IV. Denique e discordiis, rixis, dissensionibus,  
 litibus innumeris, nec dum finitis,  
 quibus Christiani cum Christianis seque &  
 rempublicam Christianam agitaverunt agi-  
 tantque.

I. In veteribus Prophetarum libris Messias  
 ille a Judæis desideratus adeo diversis & penè  
 contrariis notis designabatur, ut in uno eo-  
 demque viro vix concurrere posse viderentur.  
 Interdum de imperii ejus splendore, & gloriâ,  
 præclara



præclara omnia, omnia magnifica & stupenda planè prædicantur. Interdum eum, versis fatis, lugemus, nec speciosum, nec decorum, sed averfis oculis intuendum, despectum non desiderandum, ærumnarum filium & mœroris focium. Iterum in cælos evectum consortio divino fruente cernimus; mox a Deo percussus, afflictus, vulneratus etiam & lacerus crudeliter. Modò Davide ortum eundem, ejusdemque Dominum; modo quo genere natus sit, quis enarrabit?

Hæc de Messiah vaticinia inter se pugnantia, cum Judæi sequioris ævi inter se conciliare non poterant, eis quæ ad humilem & abjectam Christi sortem pertinebant, paulatim prætermisiss, ea quæ ad regium solummodò factum spectabant animo volutantes regem sibi ipsis non cujus a sacris literis expressam acceperint imaginem, humiliati primum postea triumphantis, sed quod ambitioni & avaritiæ eorum arrisit magis, inclytum, fortunatum, felicem, augustum, perpetuò victorem, atque orbis terrarum Dominum finxerunt. Atque hi venturi illius regis *χαρὰν ἔσται* ab Abrahami posteris orti in aliarum gentium scripta translati sensim profluxerunt. Persuasionem pluribus

pluribus inesse antiquis sacerdotum libris contineri fore ut valesceret Oriens; profectique Judæâ rerum potirentur, & vulgus (Judæorum scilicet) more humanæ cupidinis sibi tantam famæ magnitudinem interpretabantur. Terrarum utique Dominum Messiam futurum, de eodem crucifigendo altum silentium! Non igitur Jesus, quo commodius partes desiderati illius ageret, hoc commentum, de iis quæ ipse & discipuli ejus passurus esset, finxit; sed ex vaticinationibus justius intellectis, & enodatis explicatis, totum illud de ferali illius & suorum ἐξόδα hausit argumentum. Atqui sciebat quæ sibi barbarus tortor parabat! Et in hoc ipso non præcognitionis solum verum etiam virtutis humanâ majoris exemplum præstitit. Opus certè non tam sibi periculosæ aleæ plenum & ad popularium suorum errorem mulcendum accommodatius esset aggressus, volenti populo daturus jura, si Davidis imperium affectasset.

Solus ille e multis qui Judæam in libertatem vindicare sint polliciti, Judæos sibi adversos expertus est. Unde compertum habemus, quod ab illo prius dictum fuerat; se venisse in nomine patris sui, nec ab illis fuisse



fuisse admissum; alios nullâ auctoritate divinâ instructos venturos esse, illos vero a per-  
vicaci isto populo recipiendos. Testis Simon  
ille Magus, qui se magnam Dei potentiam  
prædicabat. Quid Dositheum memorem,  
qui Messiae titulum sibi arrogavit? Quid  
Barchochebam, antiquum de stellâ vatici-  
nium ad se trahentem? Quid alios, qui  
cum magnam Judæorum multitudinem ad  
se pellexerint a procuratoribus Romanis fusi  
sint, fugatique? Nec id prætereundum  
existimo, quod non mortem solum suam, sed  
& mortis genus singulare, & a quibus illi  
inferenda esset, prænuntiavit, “ Et ego qui-  
“ dem, si exaltatus fuero super terram, omnes  
“ ad me traham.” Quamvis enim docti qui-  
dem exaltationem hanc ad ascensionem ejus  
propriè referendam esse innuerint, non du-  
bitandum est, quin de cruce locutus sit  
Christus. Tum ex eo quod dicit, “ Sicut  
“ Möyses exaltavit serpentem, sic etiam oportet  
“ filium hominis exaltatum iri.” Nimirum  
Moses non e conspectu serpentem in cælos  
extulit, sed perticæ affixum, ut super popu-  
lum extaret conspiciendum. Tum etiam  
ex eo quod alibi Scribas & Phariseos allo-  
cutus est, “ Cum vos exaltaveritis filium  
“ hominis,

“ hominis, tunc cognoscetis.” Num Scribæ ergo & Pharifæi Iesum ad astra evexerunt? Iesum igitur de corpore ipsius in cruce efferendo dixisse se exaltandum luce clarius est. Præterea (cum postremum Hierosolymas ascenderet, vocatis seorsum discipulis) aperte dixit, “ Tradetur filius  
“ hominis principibus sacerdotum & scribis,  
“ & condemnabunt eum morte;” sed quoniam capite illum plectere non poterint, (adempta enim tunc temporis e synedrio judicia erant capitalia) idcirco addit, apud præsidem Romanum instabunt, ut eum vilissimorum reorum supplicio afficiat.

Ex quo novum prudentiæ divinitus insitæ astringitur argumentum. Puta enim passurum fore Christum; cur a gentibus? quare in cruce? Nonne magis probabile videbatur, illum a Judæis occidendum fore? nonne per tumultum? qui illum plus semel lapidibus obruere, & a montis supercilio præcipitem dejicere conabantur? Quorsum ergo hæc de se super terram exaltando prædictio, quem longè verisimilius erat in terram ab insensâ turbâ conjectum iri conculcandum.

Nec motum concitatæ plebis sine divinâ ope effugere poterat inconspicuus factus Iesus.



fus. Inconspiciuus enim cælesti virtute factus transiit per medium illorum. Id ni fecisset, nec ista prophetiæ pars de eo super terram exaltando compleri ullo modo posset, nec illud ab Isaiah olim prædictum, ab illo demum repetitum, se de carcere & iudicio sublatum iri; a pontifice videlicet Judæorum & a Romano procuratore dam- nandum. Ita ut ipse hoc vaticinii membrum sine miraculo, Judæorum concilium & Romanorum tribunal sine summâ injuriâ ad- implere nequibat. Tantæ molis erat! (ut ne lynceis quidem oculis prospectum iri cre- dibile est) quod non absque divinâ interveni- ente potentiâ, non absque Judæorum & Gentilium coëunte nequitiâ, evenire poterat.

In synedrio blasphemix, idem in præ- torio seditionis reus. A pontifice dam- natum procurator absolvit. De reo inter- rogati qui accusabant, crimen illatum non probant, sed repetunt. Quid multa? cum ab iis, qui eum falsis testimoniis conductis damnaverant, morte illum affici nefas erat; ab illo, qui eum infontem declarasset, capite plectitur. Par nobile iudicium, Caiapham & Pilatum! corruptum iudicem malis, an pusillanimum? Alter optat facere quod ne-

H h

quit,

quit; odit alter quod facturus est. Magni scilicet interest, volente iudice vapulas, an invito.—Nec honestius a Iosepho & Tacito dimissus quam a Caiapha & Pilato! quorum uterque, ipso rejecto, Vespasianum Messiam salutaverunt. Infelix iterum Iesus! qui vivus Barabbæ latroni cruento, mortuus Vespasiano imperatori sordidissimo fueris posthabitus! Cromwello, si eo tempore floruisset, posthabendus!

Iesus interea, sicut ovis ad cædem ducitur, mutus simul & innocuus. In cruce autem suffixi unus e militibus lanceâ latus aperuit; ut impleretur quod a Zechariâ prius dictum fuerat, “Aspicient in eum quem transfixerunt.” Cum autem Maria mater ejus pendenti astaret, non ineptè quod accidit referri videatur ad id quod olim illi cælitus erat revelatum per Simeonem senem, “Tuam ipsius gladius pertransibit animam.” Per latus etenim filii, ad maternum pectus facilis transitus! Οὕτως μὲν ἐπρεπε τὸν ἀρχηγὸν τῆς σωτηρίας ἡμῶν διὰ πάθηντων τελειῶσαι.

Ut autem omnes hoc modo ad se traheret, id quidem maximè admirandum duco. Quis enim adeo insipiens est, ut dolorem ambiat? Quis tam crassi ingenii, ut immensam  
discipulorum



discipulorum messem ex egregiâ cruciatuum & mortis spe se suscitaturum credat? Sed hoc non hujus loci est; id obiter innuendum censeo, hunc præcipuum Messiae *χαρὰν ἔσται* in pervetusto Jacobi vaticinio extitisse, “ Ad illum confluent populorum  
“ coetus.” Atque hæc de Christo hætenus; ad discipulos ejus transeundum est.

Si de iis quæ qui Christum exceperunt, passi sint, & eorum cum iis quæ ipse prædixerat concordantiam scire velis, ad Evangelium primum, deinde ad Acta, quæ vocant, Passiones potius apostolorum dixerim, respicias. Profligati imperatoris profligatus exercitus! Quæ regio in terris vestri non plena laboris! secundum illud antiquitus scriptum, “ Percutiam pastorem, & dispergentur oves  
“ gregis!” & illud a Domino apertius declaratum, “ Tradent vos in conciliis & in syna-  
“ gogis suis, & flagellabunt vos; & ad præ-  
“ fides & ad reges ducemini *propter me* (in  
“ testimonium illis & gentibus) & perse-  
“ quentur vos a civitate in civitatem, &  
“ eritis *odio omnibus propter nomen meum*;  
“ & dicent omne malum adversus vos men-  
“ tientes.” Quam utraque hujus prophetiæ pars ad unguem completa fuerit, nemo qui

Acta apostolorum labiis primoribus attigerit  
 ignorare possit. Sed ut ab uno omnes discamus,  
 Paulinum illud mecum in mentem revocate : “ In laboribus plurimus, in carce-  
 “ ribus frequens, in plagis sæpe, non raro in  
 “ ipsius mortis faucibus; a Judæis quintâ vice  
 “ flagris sævissimè, ter a Romanis virgis cæsus  
 “ fui; semel lapidatus, ter naufragium feci,  
 “ nocte & die in profundo maris. In itineri-  
 “ bus plerumque, periculis fluminum, pericu-  
 “ lis latronum, periculis ex genere, periculis  
 “ ex gentibus, periculis in civitate, periculis in  
 “ solitudine, periculis in mare, periculis in fal-  
 “ sis fratribus; in labore & æumnâ, in vigi-  
 “ liis multis, in fame & siti, in jejuniis multis,  
 “ in frigore & nuditate; ne omnia memorem,  
 “ occupationes quæ mihi quotidie nascuntur  
 “ ob curam quam gero ecclesiarum.”

In nascentis ecclesiæ annalibus a fine istius  
 historiæ ad Trajani usque tempora hiatus valde  
 deflendus; exinde hujus rei exitus clara luce  
 a scriptoribus Romanis offunditur. Qui  
 Judæos (hoc enim invisum nomen miseris  
 inustum erat Christianis) Roma “ a Claudio  
 “ expulsos referunt, a Nerone trucidatos;  
 “ immo pereuntibus addita ludibria, ut fera-  
 “ rum tergis contexti laniatu canum interi-  
 “ rent;



“rent; aut crucibus affixi; aut flammâ usti,  
“plerique in id reservati, ut, cum defecisset  
“dies, in usum nocturni luminis urerentur.”

Id hic præcipuè notandum censeo quod ab  
*omnibus odio* sint habiti, pia simul & inno-  
cua turba; qui omne malum in eos menti-  
entes dixerunt. Hoc prædixit Dominus,  
hoc præcepit apostolus; nemo vestrûm ut  
homicida, aut fur, aut maledicus patiatur;  
Christus enim passus est, qui peccatum non  
fecit, nec inventus est dolus in ore ejus.

Cum imperator ob grande illud Romanæ  
urbis incendium in omnium odium venisset,  
abolendo rumori crimen in Christianos con-  
jecit; eosque hac de causâ quæsitissimis af-  
fecit pœnis. Eo facilius crimen illud Chris-  
tianis obtendi poterat, quod multa de futurâ  
mundi conflagratione impiisque igne puni-  
endis Petrus in secundâ suâ epistolâ, circa hoc  
tempus editâ, copiosè scripserat. Utut hoc  
sit, in commentariis Romanis compertum est  
Neronem in sectam Christianam tum maximè  
Romæ orientem Cæsariano gladio ferocisse.

A Tacito accepimus Christianos per flagitia  
invisos; sanctissima Christi religio exitiabilis  
nuncupatur superstitio; ex Judæâ illius mali  
origine oriunda. Inter atrocia & pudenda

ab eodem nominatur. Deinde Christianos non incendii crimine, sed odio humani generis correptos! Suetonius Jesu doctrinam superstitionem novam vocat & maleficam. Christianos ut perpetuo tumultuantes, Christum ut tumultûs impulsorem, describit. E Lactantio discimus quosdam odio proprio in Christianos tollendos eos censuisse.

Hucusque per labores, peregrinationes, calumnias, & certamina, eluctabatur infans ecclesia, tandem populi sui precibus non averfus, promissionis suæ non oblitus, in hostes Dominus vertebat gladium! Delenda sunt Hierosolyma? “Relinquetur vobis domus  
“vestra deserta,” & “Non relinquetur lapis super lapidem qui non destruetur.  
“Pro certo habetote hanc hominum ætatem  
“non præterituram antequam hæc omnia  
“fiant!” Hujus prophetiæ completio & Judæis incredulitatis pœna fuit & ab illâ necessario quodammodo profluxisse videatur. Christianorum pacifici mores excidium avertere potuissent, quod gens in seditionem pronior sibi arcessebat. Infinitum esset memorare quibus discordiis urbs laboraverit; quas copias Titus coëgerit, quot aggeres erexerit, murorum ambitum & magnitudinem, urbisque



bisque munitionum firmitatem, quas per avaritiam Claudianorum temporum empto muniendi jure in pace Judæi struxerant, tanquam ad bellum; quas clades & calamitates, quot mala, sæviente bello, quot gliscente seditione & quot fame grassante perpeffi tandem capti sunt. Illud imprimis observandum, quod templum, Dei sententiâ damnatum, imperatore maximè invito conflagravit. Mirandam etiam hic Josephi, acutissimi alias viri, cæcitatem, qui quum deflendum putet opus omnium quotquot unquam extiterint maximè mirabile, inde tamen solatium capit, quod fatum ut animantibus ita operibus et locis sit ineluctabile; id præsertim in eo dolendum præteriens, quod ante diem caderent Hierosolyma; si populares ejus nuntiis divinitus missis auscultavissent etiam hodie stare potuissent, non à Romanorum copiis, non a civilibus odiis, non ab edaci tempore, non a flammante Dei dextrâ, diruenda.

Non equidem invideo, miror magis, doctorum quorundam in Flaviano testimonio stabiliendo ingeniosam simul & inanem diligentiam. Quæ dum probabilis esse laborat, fit inutilis. Fac enim Josephum Jesum eo tempore fuisse & mira fecisse, & multos sibi ad-

jūnxisse, & a Pilato in crucem actum, & Christum fuisse vocatum, & a suis redivivum prædictum scripsisse: Num Julianus ista negat? At Messiam ipsum fuisse nec Flavius credit, cum ad Vespasianum præcipuam de Christo vaticinationem trahit. Idem, cum multis ab Jesu mirè prædictis nullam prorsus adhibuerit fidem, innumera quædam antecessisse urbis & templi vastationem prodigia refert, vel ridicula planè vel quotidiana. Visæ per cælum concurrere acies, rutilantia arma, & subito nubium igne collucere templum; expansæ repente delubri fores, & audita major humanâ vox “excedere deos,” simul ingens motus excedentium. Quid quod pace D. Augustini dixerim, de stellâ gladio simili per anni spatium supra civitatem ardente? De vaccâ agnum enixâ? Quid de futili istâ Jeshûs Ananidæ fabulâ annos septem, Væ, væ, vociferante nondum rauco, nec delassato? De Jesu nostro ne γρη quidem. Quamvis ille quadraginta annos ante exortum bellum adhuc pacatâ civitate, & rerum omnium copiâ abundante, clamarit, immo lacrymis clamore mistis, “Hierosolyma! Hierosolyma! “ne fletus pro me, sed pro vobis, & vestrum “ærumnis fundatis, Israël filia!” Sed alii eximia



eximia ab illo edita signa pro suâ libidine interpretabantur, alii pro nihilo habuerunt, donec excidium patriæ ipsorumque exitium omnium redarguebant dementiam.

Nec discipulis solum Christi templum istud videbatur inexpugnabile, sed etiam Tito; qui non minus miratus est turrium & singulorum lapidum magnitudinem; & cum contemplaretur templum in modum arcis, propriosque muros, labore & opere ante alios; ipsasque porticus queis templum ambiebatur, egregium propugnaculum, “Deo, “inquit, favente, pugnavimus! Deus est qui “Judæos ex istis munimentis detraxit;” quid enim aggeres vineæque, quid cuncta expugnandis urbibus reperta apud veteres, aut novis ingeniis structa, contra tures adeo munitas valerent? Sed

“Iræ Sionem exitio gravi

“Stravere, & altis mœnibus ultimæ

“Stetere causæ, cur perirent

“Funditus, imprimeretque muris

“Hostile aratrum exercitus insolens.”

Illis solum relictis, quæ quanta fuissent Hierosolyma monstrarent, quæ ne posthac resurgerent unquam, prohiberent. Multi-

tudo autem cæſorum in hac urbe & gente expugnandâ fidem pene ſuperat. Magnâ colluvie, & cæterarum urbium clade aucta, tota gens, veluti in carcere, eſt incluſa, & populum univerſum circumvallavit bellum. Anguſtiæ virorum cadaveribus obſtructæ, & tota civitas ſanguine ſuperfuſa, ut incendiï etiam pars cruore civium extingueretur. Si de hîſtoriâ dubitas, ad prædictionem provocamus. Sententiam a Chriſto latam cum hîſtoriâ a Judæo ſcriptâ conferas. Hoc Flavii teſtimonium ipſo vel invito veritati Chriſtianæ lucem clariffimam affert. Ab eventu prædictum patet: “ Veniet ſuper vos om-  
“ nis ſanguis juſtus qui effuſus eſt ſuper ter-  
“ ram, a ſanguine Abel juſti interfecti primum  
“ qui clamavit ad Dominum, uſque ad ſan-  
“ guinem Zechariæ Barachidæ quem poſtre-  
“ mum interficietis; quâ cæde menſura ini-  
“ quitatis veſtræ adimplebitur. Pro certo  
“ ſcītote hanc ſtragem venturam ſuper pro-  
“ geniem hanc.”

Hujus oraculi inſignis completio non vic-  
tis, quamvis oppreſſis, Chriſtianis ſpem novam  
addidit; gentium in ſe armatorum furori  
occurrere paratis. Quæ non poenarum ge-  
nera, quas non tormentorum machinas in-  
nocuis



nocuis Christianis Romanorum imperatores  
admovere ?

“ Non mihi si linguæ centum sint, oraque centum,

“ Ferrea vox, omnes scelerum comprehendere for-

“ mas,

“ Omnia pœnarum percurrere nomina possem.”

Omnis sexus atque ætatis homines, ad  
exustionem rapti; vel ligatis ad colla mo-  
laribus mari mergebantur. Comprehenfi  
presbyteri & ministri, &, sine ulla probati-  
one, damnati cum omnibus suis deduceban-  
tur, non singuli, sed gregatim. Ediētis  
cavebatur ut quispiam illis ullius religionis  
hominibus impunè noceret; ne illi a quo-  
piam illatam injuriam propulsare audeant.  
Ursis ferociæ & magnitudinis imperatoriæ  
non comedendi, sed absorbendi objectabantur.  
Postremo, nulla pœna in Christianos levis,  
non insulæ, non carceres, non metalla; sed  
ignis, crux, feræ.

Si in hâc vitâ spes vestra sola sita effet,  
miserrimi omnium Christiani! Sed spes me-  
lior animis insidens, pericula, & tormen-  
torum multiformium genera despexit. Im-  
mo ambiebant supplicia, mortem lucro ap-  
posuerunt. Animarum magnarum prodigi!

Solus illis metus, ne non perirent! Sibi invicem gratulabantur se dignos esse qui Dominum & Ducem non æquis passibus sequerentur. Deum interfectoris suis propitium extremo halitu deprecantes!

Sed quid mali admiserunt, imperator, ut tam diris cives tui urgeantur pœnis? Num cœnas Thyesteas objicis? Audi Plinium qui causis eorum præerat clarè eos absolventem. Morem illis coëundi fuisse ad cibum capiendum, promiscuum, tamen & innoxium. Non ergo ad *ωμοφασίαν*! Credo equidem a cœnâ Domini sensu proprio intellectâ, de comedendo corpore, & potando sanguinem Christi, hanc in Christianos conjectam fuisse calumniam. Nec a papisticorum doctrinâ imago multum abludit! a vero Reformatorum cultu abhorret maximè. Num Oedipodeas in cœtibus nocturnis mixturas metuis? Nequaquam ab iis qui sacramento se obstrinxerunt non in scelus aliquod, sed ne scelestum quicquam furtum, latrocinium, adulterium, aut his similia, committerent. Nonne hoc quoque a voce *αγάπαι* ad invidiam interpretatâ?

Sed ante lucem conveniebant, legimus, latebrofa & lucifugax natio! quia id non liceret de die. Hoc enim ab initio factum noctu



noctu & portis clausis præ Judæorum timore. Persequeris ergo infontes, & eo quod crudelitatem vitare conantur, eos acrius insequeris. Forfitan & alia & ea quidem ignoscenda antelucanorum conventuum causa. Quod Christus eo tempore resurrexerit, & tum etiam illum sperent rediturum. Sed hoc edicto cautum est, ne coëuntibus ante diluculum occasio conspirandi adversus Cæsarem & imperium præberetur! Idcirco hoc ipsum facere desierant, post edictum præsidis, quo secundum imperatoris mandata *ἑταίριας* esse vetuerat. Convenit proculdubio bono & gravi præfidi curare ut pacata atque quieta sit provincia quam regit, & sollicitè agat ut malis hominibus careat; eosque conquirat. Esto; quid de bonis? Quis tumultus, quis seditionis, Christianum arguet? Mandatis cavetur ut præfides sacrilegos, latrones, plagiarios conquirant, & prout quisque deliquerit in eum animadvertant. Recte. Quid autem in Dei cultores, in infontes, in probos, statuendum? Atqui inter sacrilegos Christianos ponis, quia imperatoriæ imagini non thure & vino supplicarent; quia non Trajanum Christo, imperatorem Romanum summo Numini, anteponerent. O philosophum

phum infulsum! O infanientis sapientiæ consilio errantem! Ideo in eos animadvertendum esse censes, non quod illi deliquerint, sed quod tu deliras! Quia nollent Dei Optimi Maximi cultum cum fœdissimorum gentium idolorum cultu fociare. O facinus quæsitissimis poenis afficiendum! Cæsari quæ sunt Cæsaris reddunt; Deo soli divina reddituri! Et a vitâ potius quam a veritate cedere malunt. Hancine pervicaciam dicis, an constantiam inauditam & penè divinam? puniendam an honore summo prosequendam? O invidendum dedecus! Ignominiam omni laudi anteponendam! “Ecce spectaculum ad  
“quod respiciat, intentus operi suo, Deus;  
“virum bonum cum malâ fortunâ compositum:” &, ut quidam ex vatibus vestris non indignè scripserit, “Justum & propositi tenacem, quem nec civium ardor prava jubentium, nec vultus instantis tyranni mente quatit solidâ.” At superstitionem pravam folius Dei cultum vocas; & ut immodicam exprobras, cui nullus debeat esse aut pudor aut modus. Et nullius flagitii reos ob solum nomen Christi persequeris? Hoccinè credibile est? hocchine philosopho & procuratore dignum? Sed dabimus ignorantiae tuæ,



tuæ, quam tu ne innocentiae nostræ concedis, veniam. Hæc sola apud Christianos talionis lex! Aliter enim quî fieri poterat quod a Domino prædictum legimus, Εσε-  
δε μισθμενοι ὑπο παντων Δις το ονομα μς.

Ita ab incunabilis circumvolutos dracones validâ manu compressit infans ecclesia, repullulantia Hydræ capita jam maturior excisura. Pulcherrima ecclesiæ afflictæ facies! A matronâ illa Homericâ non abludens δακρυοεν γελασσασα! utinam et triumphantis! Sed quod non improborum hominum, quod dæmonum odium non potuit, sacra potuit dissensio! Et caritate avulsâ ruit Ecclesia!

“ Quam non Tydides nec Larissæus Achilles,

“ Non plagæ domuere decem, non mille fecures.”

Suorum diffidiis foedata jacet, & discissa respublica Christiana! Quanta de ritibus Mosaïcis a gentilibus (ad religionem Christianam conversis) observandis disputatio! Et Simonianæ scholæ propaginibus se latius effundentibus impurissimæ Carpocratianorum oriuntur sectæ. Quæ iterum causa in Paschali eruperit discordiâ! Anathematis fulmine in Asiaticos a Victore vibrato? De Trinitate quæ turba! Quamvis hujus generis pleraque sunt ut impium sit homini de his definire, qualia

qualia fere sunt quæ de ratione essentiæ Divinæ deque distinctione Personarum philosophamur. Si hæc quæ longè superant humani ingenii captum cum supercilio pronunciemus, & earum rerum scientiâ quas nec angeli satis intelligunt nos jactemus apud populum, mihi nec pium videtur, nec utile. De millennio, de hæreticorum baptismo, de Mariâ Deiparâ, de unicâ in Christo voluntate, variè ambigitur. Quibus certaminibus de peccato originali & libero arbitrio lacerata est ecclesia! partibus non minus a se invicem quam ab evangelio dissentientibus. De imaginum cultu longa controversia! Orientalis ab Occidentale ecclesia toto cælo distans, filioque symbolis inserto.

Quam foedissimus Romanæ ecclesiæ status cum sordidissimæ Romæ dominantur meretriculæ! Cum eorum arbitrio darentur & mutarentur episcoporum sedes, et (horresco referens) ad illarum nutum dixerim, an libitum in Petri cathedram inveherentur pontifices indocti, impii, incesti, defecrandi. Hi cum mores fuerint, de doctrinis rogités? Tyrannis pontificia, clericalis coelibatus, scriptura & cultus linguâ malè intellectâ, purgatorium, corporalis in eucharistiâ præsentia, & suprema



ma sedes apostolica etiam in reges Evangelii humilem spem de regno non huiusce mundi sub pedibus terendam prostravere. Quid memorem concitatam erga pios Valdenses procellam? Pura jam & simplex qualis e cælo descenderat, non amplius fides Christiana, sed subtilibus quæstionibus implicata, & ex disputandi pruritu excrevit ecclesiæ scabies. Castioris theologiæ studio expulso futilibus discussus est controversiis Christianus orbis, Wickleso in fugam converso, Hussu capitis damnato, Lutherus tandem optatam diu, frustra adhuc tentatam, reformationem feliciter auspicatus est. Quo autem martyrum sanguine seminata est ecclesia Anglicana! In quot partes statim divisa Reformatarum ecclesiarum facies! Ut in Christianâ republicâ quæras etiam leges Christi. Neglectis moribus, de opinionibus certatur undique, ridiculis, exiguis, & ad fidem Christi minimè pertinentibus! Heu pietas! heu prisca fides! inculta jaces scholasticæ theologiæ spinis obfita;

“ Pro molli viola, pro purpureo Narcisso

“ Carduus, & spinis surgit Paliurus acutis!”

Argutiis, inventiunculis, & somniis homunculorum quorundam inquinata penè & ob-

ruta Christianorum spes! Qui quicquid uspiam temerè conceperint, id ad extremum pertinaciter defendunt. Hinc lacrymæ, minæ, et bella plus quam civilia!

Infandum istud tribunal inquisitio (Deo gratias) Hispanicis, origine illius mali, relegata, oris exulat! Acta de hæreticis comburendis jam diu sunt rescissa; solis tamen, quæ poterit, armis adhuc dimicatur, convitiis et calumniis; exacuunt ut gladium linguas suas, intendunt arcum sermones amaros.

Sed non desperandum est, Fratres, de republicâ Christianâ. Oremus saltem pro pace Hierosolymarum, ut hoc vaticinio plus satis completo etiam illud alterum jam tandem impleri incipiat: “Cum lupo, & pardus, & leo, & ursus, aspis etiam et regulus naturæ feritate depositâ cum ove & agno, cum tenello & infantis Jesu grege facili convictu confociati requiescant. Cum non occident, non nocebunt, in universo monte sancto Dei.”



THE SUBSTANCE

O F

A P R A Y E R,

Used sometimes before the Sermon.

**O**! Thou most pure and perfect nature! thou greatest and best of beings! invisible indeed in thy essence, but evident in thy effects; thou who art our Father, by having produced us out of nothing, and more especially so, by having begotten us again to the hope of life in Christ Jesus, by his resurrection from the dead—Teach us, we implore thee, to pay all due reverence to thee, our Creator and Redeemer.

That we may conceive justly, though imperfectly, of thy perfections, and express humbly our sense of them.

Give us power to transcribe the imitable part of thy nature into our own. Incline

us to look up to the compleat pattern of thy beloved Son, till we arrive at some faint resemblance of the Deity, by aspiring at the perfection of humanity. Give us the will to obey all thy commands, and to rest satisfied in all thy dispensations; that we may with as much constancy, chearfulness, and alacrity, comply with the designs of thy providence on earth, as the purer spirits do in heaven. Let us imitate their perfections here, that we may be made partakers of their happiness hereafter.

Be pleased to give success to all our honest endeavours to acquire the necessities and conveniencies of this life, and the wisdom to discern that they ought never to be attained by such methods as are destructive of the more solid and permanent satisfactions of another. Look down with mercy and compassion upon all our failings, upon all our follies; and give us too such tender dispositions of mind, that we may exert a spirit of humanity and forbearance in all our dealings with our fellow-creatures. Teach us, by an habitual exercise of reason, to distinguish between the proper and perverse use of the objects which surround us, that our passions



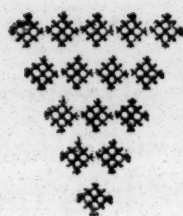
*used sometimes before the Sermon.* 485

may be kept in a due subservience to the ends for which thou hast implanted them. Suffer us not to be lulled into any sinful security. If the still small voice of mercy cannot reach us, alarm us with the terrors of thy judgments; break the heart that will not bend; and lead us by any effort, however unwelcome or uneasy, through that mystery of iniquity which thou hast permitted, into the glorious liberty of thy sons, O God!

Pity, Father, and pardon and assist, our weak attempts to address thee as we ought: accept this humble act of duty and obedience; indulge us kindly when we ask aright, and deny us mercifully what we ask amiss; and that we may be sure to ask such things as shall please thee, give us leave to include our petitions in the name, words, and, as far as we are able, in the spirit of that beloved Son in whom thou art well pleased, referring the issue of all our hopes and aims ultimately to the direction of thy good pleasure and providence. Even so, Lord, it is fit for us, weak and wretched as we are, to submit all our desires and views to the direction of thy supreme controul, eternal  
everlasting

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everlasting king! enshrined in glory, which cannot be approached, invested with wisdom and power, which no arm can resist, no tongue express, no thought conceive.





# ERRATA.

| Page | Line |                                              |
|------|------|----------------------------------------------|
| 86.  | 1.   | <i>for generally read gently</i>             |
| 389. | 3.   | <i>for John vii. 23. read John viii. 32.</i> |
| 404. | 1.   | <i>for on read one</i>                       |
| 419. | 1.   | <i>for founded read founded</i>              |
| 444. | 24.  | <i>for sacrificed read sacrificed</i>        |

